SAINT TERESA OF LISIEUX

A SPIRITUAL RENASCENCE

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BY

FR. HENRY PETITOT, O.P.

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PREFACE

THE doctrine of St Teresa of the Child Jesus demands present investigation by all whose minds are open to the evolution and progress of the spiritual life in the Catholic Church. One must have read the saint's autobiography very superficially, and have taken but a vague interest in the cult paid to her by the whole Catholic world, to fancy that it is merely a question of popular enthusiasm, or of imaginative sentiment, something artificial and transitory.

The deep and widespread influence exercised by Sœur Thérèse de l'Enfant-Jésus exceeds all that one might venture to conceive. A few years ago Cardinal Dougherty, Archbishop of Philadelphia, returning from a pilgrimage to Lisieux, passed through China and Japan, Shanghai and Tokio, where he thought to make known the existence of Sœur Thérèse. As soon as he began to speak, the missionaries showed him the saint's biography, translated into Chinese and Japanese. The pilgrims who hasten singly or in groups to Lisieux from all parts of the world are now to be counted by thousands. And how many people there are who follow the saint's

example and are converted to a new life of humility, of love of God and their neighbour!

Anyone who soberly and impartially investigates the origin and progress of the cult paid to the saint since the publication of the autobiography in 1898 soon becomes aware that shallow and facile explanations to which impatient minds are fain to have recourse are in this case totally inadequate. "It is a passing infatuation." The words come easily enough, and the less is known of the facts, the more emphatically are they uttered. Neither Sœur Thérèse's lovely face, which is said to have been "touched up," nor the advertisement said to be given to her name, nor the interested and fetish-like devotion of people who ask temporal favours of the little Thérèse, are enough to account for the veneration minds of every stamp have shown her throughout the world.

The saint's well-known portrait, which at once attracts attention and sympathetic interest, which has begun the conquest of so many people—as, for instance, that of Marie-Edmée de la Tour d'Auvergne, a girl of noble birth who did not like "holes where people wear themselves out with doing nothing," as she called convents. If this portrait has helped to work conversions, it is because of its great repose and rare depth of expression. "I sometimes found it difficult," said one of the nuns who knew her best, "to bear her steady gaze, it was so deep and searching."

People of goodwill probably do not reflect upon all this when they first come across that face; but the fact remains that what strikes them first, although they hardly realize it, is the gentle power of that countenance, apparently so simple, but on analysis shown to be so complex.

There has been far too much discussion as to the authenticity of the famous portrait which figures as the frontispiece to the autobiography.

Impartial and sound judges, who knew Sœur Thérèse personally, do not scruple to say that it is a far better likeness than all the other photographs said to be more exact. Everyone knows that photographs can never convey the expression of some very mobile and sensitive faces. As a rule, whenever anyone is asked for a photograph of himself, he refuses on the pretext that he does not possess one. And very often, in order to secure a really satisfactory portrait of one's father or mother, one is reduced to choosing two or three of the least unlike photographs to take to some celebrated portrait-painter, who makes a really good likeness out of them. Writers and persons of note who feel it their duty to leave their profile or their face to posterity do likewise, and they take the trouble to sit for the artist. So true is it that only portraits painted by a master hand can render the real expression of mobile, delicate, and thoughtful faces. Providence permitted that one of the saint's sisters should be both an excellent photo-

grapher and a portrait-painter. One must have known Soeur Thérèse de l'Enfant-Jésus intimately, and have fathomed the mysterious meaning of her charming smile, to succeed in reproducing it faithfully. Sœur Thérèse's now classic portrait is the only one which satisfies those who have studied the saint's countenance, and have handled, scrutinized, or contemplated all the other representations, not excepting the fine picture by Roybet. We should not have paused to consider, even in passing, the question of Sœur Thérèse's portrait, were it not necessary already to eliminate the legends which have freely sprung up around the saint, and which are likely to arouse prejudices against her in the minds of those who know no better.

What has not been said, for instance, about the noisy notoriety reputed to have been made around her name? People who are quite indifferent to religion, and wholly taken up by their business, yet who in spite of themselves are constrained to notice the countless pictures, engravings, statues, books, and pamphlets about St Teresa of the Child Jesus, might in the end wonder and in their haste say: "What a fine advertisement the Carmelites of Lisieux, and the Catholic Church, have managed to get up for that little nun!" Such a remark might be nothing more than sulky outburst. But a whole group of unbelievers, spontaneously hostile to religion, and to the manifestations of the Holy

Spirit, are endeavouring by their books and their articles, to persuade their gentle readers that nuns and monks, priests and ecclesiastical authorities can "push" saints whenever an opportunity offers. Thus Voltaire, and more recently Anatole France, made up the story, and held to it, that the monks had managed to thrust the Maid of Orleans upon the people. And readers who cannot spare time to verify documents or quotations, convinced by the noted author's literary talent, all unsuspectingly accept a mass of false constructions for "a masterpiece of the most subtle and most probable psychology."

The naturalistic school, by the pen of a writer of some renown, have not failed to apply this method of so-called critical interpretation to Sœur Thérèse de l'Enfant-Jésus. We may be forgiven if we quote, almost verbatim, a passage inspired by this rationalistic spirit. It is the clergy, they maintain, who have moulded Sœur Thérèse on the model of the great saint, her namesake:

"Sœur Thérèse de l'Enfant-Jésus is a brazen and puerile plagiarism of St Teresa. But mere wishing will not make a great mystic, and, moreover, docility alone will not suffice, even in the hands of crafty amateurs, to turn a novice endowed with an intelligence slightly above the average into a striking flower in their hagiographical gardens. . . ." The superiors of the

Carmel of Lisieux, a vicar-general, a Jesuit, "directed the young nun as they chose, gave her Surin's *Foundations of the Spiritual Life* to meditate upon, made her learn St John of the Cross' *Spiritual Exercises* by heart, adding as a bedside book the mystical writings of St Teresa. . . ." Unfortunately, Sœur Thérèse de l'Enfant-Jésus was to die young, and she was not long able to enjoy the special attentions which were heaped upon her. "After some months of a smiling and resigned agony, she gently, very gently, breathed her last. . . ." Was she to be buried and wholly to disappear? Following the example of the superiors of the great Teresa of Jesus, the superiors of the Carmel of Lisieux had ordered the little Thérèse de l'Enfant-Jésus to write the story of her life. "Yes . . . and in 1894 the young Carmelite was told to do so. . . . But, granted that the book is not apocryphal, what is it worth? It is simply a plagiarism of St Teresa's most familiar sayings. And it is just this shabby imitation which makes one think that the girl did not write the book, unless someone guided her pen and revised what she wrote. . . . So low is the intellectual level of priests who stoop to counsel or to execute such platitudes. . . . If they had only stopped there! But no, the dignitaries of the Church wanted a saint . . . so they produced miracles. . . . And then, when they had the miracles, they could not do otherwise than

exhume the remains of the Servant of God. . . . After that the business was fairly under way. Post-cards, pious pictures, booklets, pamphlets, and even books were printed. . . . Her poems, her prose writings, her portrait, were printed by the thousand and in all sorts of patterns. Even a calendar was produced. These were despatched all over the world. They were to be found on sale in Bogota in Colombia, at the Cape, at Nijni-Novgorod just as much as in the basilica of the Sacré-Coeur at Montmartre. What was the object of it all? It was twofold. First, to make another Teresa of Avila, a great mystic, out of the little Thérèse Martin . . . which was a complete failure, and, next, to manufacture a modern saint who should be a fruitful source of revenue to the diocese of Bayeux and to Lisieux. And this, at present, is a complete success."[1]

Our Catholic readers must forgive us for having quoted the explanation inspired by the naturalistic school, summarized and expurgated though it be. The supposition that the autobiography is "apocryphal, or a plagiarism," does not for a moment bear investigation. It is now known, and we shall tell the story in some detail in Chapter IV, by what apparently accidental chain of circumstances the book came to

[1] If our readers will only read the next few chapters, they will realize how many misleading and inaccurate statements this page contains.

be written. And further, nothing could be more unlike the writings of St Teresa of Avila than the work of St Teresa of Lisieux. How are we then to justify the charge that it is apocryphal, a plagiarism, or an imitation?

As to the imputation of excessive and unparalleled publicity having been organised around the person of Sœur Thérèse, if we go back to its origin and follow it step by step, we shall soon be able to prove that it was evoked by the devotion of the faithful, and that it is, strictly speaking, a resultant, and not an antecedent cause. The various editions, publications, pictures, and pamphlets were only printed or published to keep pace with the demand. They were not spread abroad after the fashion of publishers, through the medium of the Press, by catalogues or advertisements, or by notices intended to attract the attention of the indifferent; they were only inserted in letters or orders which met the need expressed by the faithful. When we come to make a detailed examination of the way the cult paid to Sœur Thérèse has been spread, we realize that it has never had any of the attributes which characterize notoriety or advertisement. For the past twenty-five years the Carmel of Lisieux has been swamped by requests and entreaties from every corner of Christendom. We give a testimony to this point which ought to convince any honest man: "We have been blamed for having had catalogues or

leaflets printed, giving the names and the price of the various publications, which have the appearance of being a trade advertisement. . . . But these leaflets are quite indispensable. We could never give the information in writing every time we are asked for it." That is very evident. As soon as the autobiography appeared, the faithful became enthusiastic about Sœur Thérèse, and it is this movement which excited and elicited all the notoriety attached to her cult as a *beata* and as a saint.

Thus the origin of the veneration and the fame of Sœur Thérèse dates from the publication of her autobiography, entitled *Histoire d'une Ame écrite par elle-même*. The book, which was published by the Saint-Paul Press, appeared in October, 1898. It was not long before letters in praise of the book began to be received, and in increasing numbers; they averaged five a day at first, then fifty, then two hundred, four hundred, and so on. Likenesses of the saint were asked for by the dozen. Before the war of 1914, when Sœur Thérèse had not as yet been beatified, about two hundred thousand copies of the autobiography had been printed in French during the first fifteen years. The book had already been translated into more than thirty foreign languages, in some cases unknown to the Carmelites.

The poor nuns of a little Carmel, as obscure as that of Lisieux had been up to that

time, would have been quite incapable of getting up, by any sort of factitious propaganda, what would wrongly be described as a bookseller's boom. It was the book itself which by its own worth, its contents, aroused, as we have just said, the enthusiasm of the faithful. And similarly it was not Sœur Thérèse's beatification and canonization which forced her cult upon the faithful: they legitimized it, true, but the little nun had already virtually been canonized by the voice of the people. In this again the Church yielded to the impulsion and did not originate it. "There will still be saints canonized at Rome," wrote Renan in his *Etudes d'Histoire religieux,* "there will be none canonized by the people." St Teresa of the Child Jesus has most openly given the lie to this pseudo-scientific prophecy.

But how is it that the autobiography should have elicited a cult of this kind from the very first? Among those admirers of the saints who may be considered competent to express an opinion, many would probably do so in some such terms as these: "When the book fell into our hands about the year 1900, if we read and reread it, and copied out whole passages, especially those which treat of humility, of charity to one's neighbour, of the love of God, it was not because the book had been boomed unknown to us, nor because Sœur Thérèse had a sweet and thoughtful face, which to us seemed quite a secondary consideration, nor yet because the

saint granted temporal favours or worked miracles which were likewise unknown to us; if at that time we put this autobiography among our bedside books, and meditated more especially on the last few chapters, never suspecting that of these three had been added to the others at a later date, it was simply on account of the book's essential, intrinsic, and original value." Such, with but few variations, would be the testimony given by the early admirers of St Teresa of the Child Jesus.

We could not better explain the success of the autobiography than by quoting the words of the most competent witness in this matter, who knew Sœur Thérèse better than anyone, and who followed the progress of her influence and her renown day by day and step by step. "As we read the autobiography we feel quite sure that we know all about the soul of Sœur Thérèse de l'Enfant-Jésus: it is revealed to be a wonderful model of heroic sanctity, and God adds his grace; to my mind there lies the whole secret of its popularity." It would be impossible to express in simpler or in happier terms the principal or essential cause of the religious renown St Teresa of the Child Jesus acquired in so short a time.

The saint, by a life of seeking, of trial, of reading, and of personal study, created a wonderful, and, we should add, a new pattern of heroic sanctity. No less a personage than the Sovereign

Pontiff himself, Pope Pius XI, in an address to the pilgrims of the diocese of Bayeux, has solemnly declared it to be *omen novum*.

A gentle, steady light shone forth, a revelation was made, an inspired book appeared, and every simple and sincere soul, in love with the ideal and the good, forthwith rushed to the flame, to the new revelation. But something still more wonderful happened: souls who were blinded and hostile, the slaves of their senses, found the light and the grace of conversion through a chance meeting with that book. In the opinion of competent authorities, the autobiography is and will continue to be Sœur Thérèse's chief means of influence. The book really possesses a mysterious grace which no other biography or study of the saint will ever have. We need not seek any other reason for its supernatural efficacy; there we find a wonderful and a new pattern of heroic sanctity, *omen novum*. The various causes to which one might have recourse in order to explain its popularity and its magic influence, could only be secondary or extrinsic. And the real and deep causes of spiritual influence are always immanent.

It is not enough, however, simply to assert that the pattern of holiness created by St Teresa of the Child Jesus is new and heroic; we must to the best of our ability set forth the particular qualities which constitute that novelty and that heroism.

The pattern of holiness created by St Teresa of Lisieux is new, on account, first, of its negative qualities. As a rule the most significant characteristics in a saint's spirituality, which are often overlooked, are its negative characteristics. They can only be discerned by studying history and by comparing the saints of past ages with those of the present day. It is only by the comparative study of saints' lives that we can succeed in clearly defining the negative characteristics of their spirituality. Those characteristics are important. They show us, in fact, why one holy soul should have set aside practices or methods which, although still approved, were less suited to the age in which he lived. They disclose to us in what way the man of God reacted on his time and renewed its spiritual life.

The chief negative characteristics of Sœur Thérèse's spirituality are four in number: (1) The absence of violent asceticism, of extraordinary or self-imposed mortifications; (2) the absence of any discursive or fixed method of meditation or prayer; (3) the absence of extraordinary mystical phenomena, visions, ecstasies, etc.; (4) the absence of numerous exterior good works.

These negative characteristics will explain why Sœur Thérèse's spirituality, her pattern or programme of holiness, is so apposite or new. But they do not suffice to prove to us to what an extent her life was heroic and holy.

After studying St Thomas Aquinas' *Summa Theologica,* after pondering deeply over Pascal's philosophy, and closely analyzing various saints' lives in articles or monographs, we are forced to admit that a heroic life and holiness necessarily presuppose certain contrary or complementary virtues.

For we never have to admire the excellence of any virtue in a saint without encountering in him the excellence of the complementary virtue. And it is just in these opposing virtues, which balance one another, that the whole economy of holiness lies. If ever any heroes or saints have contrived to unite contrary or complementary virtues in one harmonious whole, it is certainly the saints and heroes of the Catholic Church.

This opposition of apparently incompatible virtues, which in reality meet together in a higher principle, we call a positive antinomy, or paradox, as will be explained when we revert to the subject later. For instance, to go back for the moment to St Teresa of the Child Jesus, we chiefly distinguish in her interior life three positive antinomies: (1) The simplicity of a child combined with the consummate prudence of old age; (2) the humblest littleness united to magnanimous greatness; (3) deep joy amid cruel mental sufferings. The higher principles which effect the union of these antinomies are the gifts of the Holy Ghost, and in particular the gifts of Wisdom and of Fortitude, and lastly, the gift

of the Spirit himself, which is Charity. For charity is the keystone of the whole spiritual building.

Thus abridged and set forth in a didactic summary, our study assumes a very systematized and severe form. "Here is another theologian," people will say, "who is trying to complicate all that Sœur Thérèse had so happily simplified. Is that really the Way of Spiritual Childhood?" But this quite legitimate misgiving will certainly be dispelled after reading the first few pages of this little book. The four negative characteristics and the three positive paradoxes of Sœur Thérèse's spirituality are quite simple and relatively easy of comprehension. Moreover, if one must avoid complication, one must also be on one's guard against excessive simplification. The simplicity of the children of God is not childishness, but supreme wisdom, and that is why we retort: "If you claim thoroughly to understand Sœur Thérèse's spirituality, and her heroic sanctity, take care you never for an instant forget that in her the ingenuousness of childhood is indissolubly bound up with a sovereign prudence, and that her humble littleness is invariably accompanied by a magnanimous greatness; finally, most important of all, that her sweet and tranquil smile hides bitter sacrifices accepted for the love of God and of souls."

At the conclusion of the homily he pronounced at the solemnity of the canonization, the Sove-

reign Pontiff declared : " If this Way of Spiritual Childhood be propagated, it is easy to see how greatly it will facilitate the reform of human society, which we set before us as our programme at the beginning of our pontificate." And reverting to this idea, Pius XI foretold to the pilgrims of the diocese of Bayeux "a more thorough renewal of all Catholic life" through the influence of St Teresa of the Child Jesus.

The adequate understanding of the saint's spirituality, her virtuous example, and the graces she has obtained for her disciples have already inaugurated " the reform and renewal of Catholic life." It would be idle to disguise the fact; we all need to renew our spiritual life by some kind of mortification and prayer better suited to the manners and conditions of our age; we need greater faith in the influence of the contemplative life; we need a better understanding of the gifts of the Holy Ghost, and, above all, we need to have more frequent recourse to them. All, the faithful, priests, religious, communities, pious institutes, monastic orders, need to reform and renew their spiritual life. We may then say, with Pope Pius XI, that if Sœur Thérèse's spirituality be propagated, " the reform of human society, the renovation of Catholic life," will be singularly facilitated thereby.

" In that same hour Jesus rejoiced in the Holy Ghost, *exultavit Spiritu Sancto,* and gave thanks to the Father, the Lord of heaven and earth,

because he had hidden these things from the wise and prudent, and had revealed them to little ones, *et revelasti ea parvulis.*" Never was this saying of the Gospel more perfectly realized than in Sœur Thérèse de l'Enfant-Jesus. So we must not be surprised nor shocked if a pure, simple, and inspired soul be sent to unfold to us a complete revelation touching holiness.

"I very much want her to be canonized," said her eldest sister in the canonization process, "because people will then see what she wanted them to see: that they must have confidence in the infinite mercy of God, and that holiness is accessible to all sorts of people. I think a great deal more about it than that, but I don't know how to put it into words."

A great many simple and devout people will instinctively divine the real value of the message Sœur Thérèse gave; they feel that her teaching, "which makes holiness accessible to all sorts of people," is extraordinarily opportune; they have an inkling of many other truths, present and future, but they don't know how to put it into words. Surely, then, it is desirable that learned men — psychologists, historians, philosophers, and theologians—should flock to drink of the spring of living water which has been dug and disclosed by the saint of Lisieux, in order that they may tell us in so many words what we feel, yet are not able to express.

Nicodemus, acknowledging in all good faith

the transcendent efficacy of Jesus' teaching and apostolate, came to consult him by night. *Rabbi,* he said, *we know that thou art come a teacher from God, for no man can do the works that thou dost.* Jesus answered him : *Amen, amen, I say to thee, unless a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.*

But in order to be born again, one must, it is clear, die to one's past life, one must renounce many things. Nicodemus, deeply attached to his prejudices, his doctrines, his ancient traditions, pretended he did not understand. *Can a man enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born again?* he asked. Jesus repeated his words with emphasis, and interpreted their meaning : *Amen, amen, I say to thee, unless a man be born again of water and the Holy Ghost, he cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven. That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the spirit is spirit. Wonder not that I said to thee: You must be born again. The spirit breatheth where he will and thou hearest his voice, but thou knowest not whence he cometh nor whither he goeth. So is everyone that is born of the spirit.*

Spiritual renascence and childhood is not a natural renascence or childhood. Any over-literal interpretation of such expressions easily becomes strained and absurd. One must be born to another doctrine than that of the rabbis or of those whom Pascal called philosophers and wise

men. One must be born again by the gifts of the Holy Ghost, and renounce all scientific pretensions, rationalism, and purely natural criticism. One must be born again of water by cleansing oneself from one's sins, one's concupiscences, one's defilements, and one's pride. Spiritual renascence, which makes men pure, makes them apostles, martyrs, and saints, is a reality which surely it is worth one's while to investigate. We invite all of cultured mind to make the investigation with us, and to take as the object of our study and as our master a young saint inspired of God. From her let us learn in what sense we must be born again : *Oportet vos nasci denuo*.

PART I

THE ASCETICAL AND MYSTICAL LIFE: THE FOUR NEGATIVE CHARACTERISTICS

CHAPTER I

THE FIRST NEGATIVE CHARACTERISTIC OF ST TERESA OF LISIEUX'S SPIRITUALITY: THE ABSENCE OF ANY VIOLENT OR SELF-IMPOSED MORTIFICATIONS

1. The Old Asceticism or the Asceticism of Greatness.

THE Fathers of the desert and the monks had made penance, mortification and almost all asceticism consist in the absolute observance of silence, of enclosure, of manual labour, and of continual fasting on bread and water. Down to the thirteenth century these different practices essentially constituted the model of asceticism. St Bernard, who died in the middle of the twelfth century, although as a young man mortified to excess, as he himself owns, used neither the discipline nor other penances which drew blood. There is no mention of these in the lives written by his disciples and admirers. The Cistercian monk mortified himself by absolute silence, unbroken by any recreation of rule, by abstinence from meat, wine, fish, milk and white bread, and by the privation of sleep. St Bernard fasted throughout the greater part of the year until two o'clock in the afternoon; he slept four or five hours at the most in a common dormitory; he never raised his eyes; he did not know whether the roof of any common room was vaulted or flat, or whether there were three windows or only one

in the apse of the church. St Bernard's mortification is typical, and may rightly be regarded as the old model of asceticism before the appearance of the modern Orders, by which we mean the mendicant Orders.

The founding of the Friars Preachers at the beginning of the thirteenth century is a decisive date in the evolution of monastic asceticism. By the very fact that St Dominic threw his sons into the apostolate, up and down the town and country, that he set them to study and preach dogma, the whole economy of religious asceticism was bound perceptibly to be modified. Preachers, professors of sacred doctrine, missionaries as they were, the Dominicans could no longer keep strict silence or enclosure like the Fathers of the desert, the Carthusians and the Cistercians. Their apostolic duties demanded, moreover, some other daily sustenance than a pound of bread and some vegetables, and cold water to drink. They needed more abundant and more substantial food. And yet the early Dominicans, those strenuous apostles and mighty orators, gifted with ardent, passionate temperaments, and fervent and zealous to boot, felt the need of mortifications, of a rigorous asceticism, as much as, if not more than, the Cistercians. And since they could not mortify themselves by the continual observance of silence, of fasting, of enclosure, but were, on the other hand, quick and busy men, they betook themselves to flagellation,

to the discipline. Did not St Paul write: *Castigo corpus meum et in servitutem redigo* (*I chastise my body and bring it into subjection*)? Was not Christ scourged? So daily flagellation was adopted by St Dominic and his sons.

It was not exactly a new invention. The rod was a punishment prescribed for certain offenders under Roman law; the early Benedictine monastic rules had retained flogging as a penalty to be inflicted in the case of grave faults. St Peter Damian had begun to introduce its use in monasteries and among the Canons Regular. St Dominic, himself a Canon Regular, was making an innovation only in so far as he spread and to some extent regulated the daily use of the discipline. Brother John of Navarre attests that the saint inflicted it on himself every night and often made the brethren give it to him. This discipline was made of three iron chains bound together at the handle. St Dominic used to scourge himself till he drew blood. To add to this, he multiplied genuflexions, inclinations, prostrations, and wore a haircloth too, a sort of shirt made of rough cloth. Beceda, a nun at Sainte-Croix, bears witness that she used to procure the tails of oxen to make hairshirts of this description.

St Francis of Assisi, unlike Dominic, had looked askance upon the introduction of disciplines and hairshirts. In one of the early General Chapters of his budding but already

numerous Order, learning that his sons used disciplines, hairshirts, and suchlike instruments of penance, he had them collected, put into heaps, and burnt on a bonfire. St Francis of Assisi and his earliest companions were agreed on this point; he considered that absolute poverty, individual and collective, and further complicated by the eremitical life, was penance enough; he mistrusted any violent means of mortification.

But the impetus was given. There are some means of sanctification so perfectly suited to the needs and aspirations of an age that it would be vain indeed to try to forbid them. From the middle of the thirteenth century flagellation was generally adopted by the religious Orders. About the year 1260 Padre Rainieri, an Italian Dominican, was even able to establish confraternities of flagellants, so greatly was this kind of penance relished at that time. All the Dominican women saints and *beatae,* without exception, practised flagellation, genuflexions, prostrations, and other physical means of mortification of which St Dominic had set the example. To take one quite at random, there is the Blessed Benvenuta Bojani, who died at the end of the thirteenth century. We read in the lessons of the Breviary: "She wearied her body with repeated and toilsome prostrations and genuflexions. She wore a hairshirt. She girded her loins with an iron chain, which became so deeply embedded in

her flesh that it could not be removed without recourse to a surgeon. She deprived herself of wine and of meat, of sleep, sleeping when she was weary on the bare ground, a stone under her head; thrice during the night would she scourge herself with an iron chain." Blessed Columba in like manner wore a rough hairshirt, iron girdles or chains, she slept on the ground or on a table, and thrice in the night drew blood from her body with an iron discipline. In the fourteenth century St Catherine of Siena did likewise. These women all imitated and copied the ascetic model of sanctity which St Dominic had created.

It is a far cry, from the view-point of the method of mortification, from the lives of these saints and *beatae*, as we read them in our Breviary, to the life of St Teresa of the Child Jesus.

But before we inquire wherein precisely lies the asceticism of Sœur Thérèse we should notice that from the thirteenth to the nineteenth century and down to our own times, exceptional penances and bloody macerations, though to some extent abandoned as time passed, had always continued to be practised in fervent monasteries. The early Discalced Carmelites at the end of the sixteenth century were, in St Teresa's opinion, extremely mortified. The discipline taken in common was the rule at Carmel. And ever since the Discalced Carmelite friars and nuns, as we shall presently

see, have been specially inclined to bodily mortifications, whether of rule or self-imposed.

Less than a century ago Père Lacordaire, when refounding in France the Order of Friars Preachers, or Dominicans, had restored to honour the penances of which St Dominic had given so noble an example; he had, moreover, added some practices of his own to the Dominican tradition. We may read in chapter fifteen of the *Vie du P. Lacordaire,* by Père Chocarne, how the man who refounded the Friars Preachers practised penance: "The whole of his mysticism," writes Père Chocarne, "was reduced to this simple principle: to suffer: to suffer for justice, in order to expiate; to suffer for love, in order to prove it. There you have his whole line of conduct, one of deed rather than of word."[1] Père Lacordaire made disciples who followed his example and his course of mortification. And this method of asceticism helped to form many exemplary religious of outstanding merit.

[1] "Père Lacordaire," writes Père Chocarne, "had not been given the gift of silent, still contemplation at the feet of our Lord, but rather that of proving his love by generous acts. His thanksgiving after Mass was short; but he generally felt such strong impulses of love towards God that he used to retire to one of his brethren's cells to appease it . . . he would bare his shoulders, and they had, willy-nilly, to give him a good hard discipline . . . it was a real torment. However, they got used to it, and then the Father became still more exacting . . . they even had to give him hard blows, to spit in his face, and speak to him as if he were a slave. . . ."—Chocarne: *Le Père H. D. Lacordaire,* ch. xiv, p. 395.

2. The Asceticism of Sœur Thérèse or the Asceticism of Littleness.

In the matter of asceticism it behoves us to make every allowance for temperament and for individual needs. Sœur Thérèse was fond of saying in this connection: *In my Father's house are many mansions.* St Teresa of the Child Jesus entered Carmel in 1888, and witnessed the great esteem shown for bodily mortifications. The Carmel of Lisieux had been founded in 1838. The real foundress, Mère Geneviève de Sainte-Thérèse, an exemplary nun, very well balanced, very supernatural, and against whom only a slight criticism can be made—that of having been too lenient—did not much like self-imposed mortifications. She felt no attraction, so she said, save for obedience, and declared: "In the matter of penances, I do not feel drawn to any save to those of rule and in use in the monastery."

The superior who succeeded Mère Geneviève, and whose masterful prestige soon took the place of the foundress' gentler influence, was of a somewhat different opinion. Born soon after 1830, tall, distinguished, generous, gifted with robust health and ignorant of illness, eager and passionate, Mère Marie de Gonzague from the beginning of her religious life had at times felt greatly drawn to violent penances. Six years after she entered the Carmel of Lisieux she was given the office of sub-prioress. She also had to superintend the noviciate. At the outset she consulted Mère Geneviève as to the

kind of mortifications to be permitted to the novices.

"Be careful, Mother," the foundress replied, "for without great prudence and discernment it is all mere vanity and feeds self-love. Teach your daughters to break their wills, to practise charity, and to keep the whole rule perfectly; that is the real, the best penance which is always pleasing to God."

These counsels were the fruit of experienced wisdom inspired by God. They were only partially followed, and the nuns fell into an excess of mortification. In the life of Mère Geneviève one reads this significant passage, which is of the utmost importance for the understanding of Sœur Thérèse's spirituality:

"Nettles grew freely in the garden, to be used for the community's self-imposed disciplines. It was after having seen with her own eyes the result produced by such penances in respect of the sanctification of souls that Sœur Thérèse de l'Enfant-Jésus sought for a quicker and a surer way to raise herself to sanctity."

It should be noted that it was not all in one day, nor without much reflection and observation, without having herself made trial of these penances, that St Teresa of the Child Jesus gave them up and decided that they were not intended for her nor for the little souls who should adopt her Way of Spiritual Childhood. Shortly after her clothing, having read in the lives of the saints of the extraordinary mortifications many of them had inflicted upon themselves, and admiring, too, all the generosity of soul which

underlay that asceticism, Sœur Thérèse had felt drawn to imitate it. "An attraction for penance," she wrote, "was also given me." But it happened that she fell ill for having worn too long a little iron cross, the points of which had eaten into her flesh.

"This would not have happened to me for such a trifle," she afterwards said, "had not the good God wanted to make me understand that the macerations of the saints were not made for me, nor for the little souls who are to walk in the same way of childhood."

The more she advanced in age and in perfection, the more confirmed in her conscience became the assurance that the macerations of the saints, barbed disciplines, chains with iron spikes, rough hairshirts, and in general all far-fetched means of mortification, must be banned from her Way of Spiritual Childhood.

"In her earliest years," so the canonization process tells us, "with the intention of overcoming the allurements of her senses, I saw her apply herself to mortification, but with increasing simplicity and moderation as she drew nearer the end of her exile. . . . She owned to me that, in the beginning of her religious life, she thought she was right to devise ways of making her food tasteless, in imitation of the saints. 'I gave up that custom long ago,' she told me. 'When the food is to my taste, I bless God for it; when it is bad, then I accept the mortification. Such unsought mortification seems to me to be the safest and the most sanctifying.'"

Evidence of this kind affords us lively and most interesting proof that Sœur Thérèse from the outset had sought her way like an explorer

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by groping and trying various paths. Eventually she returned to the broad highway of the Gospel, to the simplicity of the children of God: *Manducate quae apponuntur vobis* (*Eat such things as are set before you*). St Francis of Assisi, whose genius is in many respects akin to that of Sœur Thérèse, had adopted the same rule for himself and his sons. We should add that our little saint took and ate her food with such indifference that her neighbours at table were never able to distinguish those dishes for which she might naturally have felt a preference. We shall return to this subject later. The chief point to be emphasized now—the one which constitutes the first negative characteristic of her Way of Spiritual Childhood—is the debarring of exceptional mortifications. She held, after mature reflection, that some authors, in their lives of the saints, dwelt unduly upon these extraordinary penances, as if they were an integral part of all holiness.

"It misleads people," she used to say. "Some people think that in order to please God, one must give oneself up without reserve to exaggerated practices of mortification, and then the devil deceives them and makes them fall into dangerous illusions. . . ."

In the golden book of Dominican spirituality and holiness, Blessed Henry Suso, by the extremes to which he pushed his mortifications—refraining from drinking until his tongue split with thirst, sleeping on a door studded with nails,

engraving the initials of the Holy Name over his heart, and the like—stands for the type of mystic who has gone the full length of bodily penance. Nothing could better satisfy our legitimate curiosity than to know what value St Teresa of the Child Jesus set on this sort of asceticism. Inclined by some supernatural sense to anything which bore the seal of excellence, Sœur Thérèse had read the Life of Blessed Henry Suso, and she gave her opinion on this subject in an intimate talk with Mère Agnès de Jésus:

"There is a passage in the life of Blessed Henry Suso," she says, "which struck me with regard to corporal penances. He had performed some frightful ones which had undermined his health, when an angel appeared to him and bade him desist, adding: 'As yet thou hast fought but as a squire; now I am about to make thee a knight.' And he gave the saint to understand how far superior was the spiritual combat to the macerations of the flesh. 'Well, Mother,' Sœur Thérèse wound up by saying, 'the good God would not have me for a squire. I was dubbed knight at once, and I set out for the wars against myself, in the spiritual field, by self-denial, by little hidden sacrifices; I have found peace and humility in that obscure combat, in which nature has no hold.'"

The more she advanced in age and in wisdom, the more the saint's reading, observation, and reflection confirmed her in her mistrust of violent or bloody asceticism. In her last years her conviction in the matter had become so absolute and peremptory that she thought it her duty to give her sister this parting recommendation: "One

must be on one's guard against them. Believe me, Mother, never launch forth on that way; it is not meant for very little souls like ours."

The saint has, moreover, clearly stated her reasons for this mistrust. "She used to tell me that the devil often deceived generous but rash souls, and drove them to excesses which injured their health and prevented them from doing their duty. She also saw in it the danger of self-complacency." In the case of very eager temperaments, or of strongly individualistic characters, inclined to depart from the common way and to seek perfection in the extraordinary, self-imposed penances feed self-love and even pride. Minds like these, lacking in balance, think they do wonders, when in reality they are wandering from the right path, straying further afield every day and misleading the souls they drag after them. Yet they will be found to be very hard on their neighbours, whom they will accuse of being slack and remiss, in their anxiety to exert some influence, and their jealousy of all authority. And for this reason, unless there be a special call, and graces checked as far as possible by several directors with due authority, experience, and prudence,[1] exceptional mortifi-

[1] Our readers will no doubt understand why we say several directors. For if anyone who felt an attraction for exceptional mortifications were to chose a single director who took the same view of the matter, he would risk not being undeceived. This, in another order of things, was the snare into which Madame Guyon and Fenelon fell.

cations, disciplines to blood, iron chains, painful penances not mentioned in the rule, should be utterly forbidden, especially in our days when people's constitutions are so enfeebled.

St Teresa of the Child Jesus' asceticism, her scheme of holiness, thus forbids self-imposed penances and very painful mortifications. But no profitable reform can be made in the economy of the ascetical life unless one substitutes something better for what one has banned. The particular merit of St Teresa of the Child Jesus, that which properly characterizes her method, was that she set this truth in full light: mortification practised in the smallest things down to the least trifles is more humiliating and no less crucifying than when practised in seeking out great voluntary pain. It was very nicely and wisely remarked in the canonization process: "The good God displays his power as much in the creation of infinitely little things as in that of infinitely great things, and it seems to me that Sœur Thérèse has precisely revealed his strength in a multitude of small microscopic acts, if one can so express it." This remark could not be better understood than by interpreting it in the light of Pascal's famous theory of the two infinites.

"There are two infinites," he writes, "which are met with in everything, the knowledge of which opens the mind to the greatest marvels: the one of greatness, the other of littleness. . . .

Philosophers have rather claimed to attain the infinite of littleness. . . . As it is we who exceed little things, we think ourselves better able to possess them, and yet it takes as much ability to attain to nothingness as to totality. The one depends on the other, and the one leads to the other. These extremes meet, and reunite by virtue of their distance, to find each other in God and in God alone."

This theory of the two infinites, so typical of Pascal, is perfectly adapted to our subject. Because there are two infinites—one of greatness, the other of littleness, which meet in God—there are for man two roads to perfection—one which attains it by the quest of great things, the other by faithfulness in the least duties. Now, these two roads, though at first divergent, soon draw nearer to each other and at their term meet in one and the same holiness. Although at an equal distance from the two infinites, great duties are beyond our reach, but little duties we control; these latter often appear to us to be a negligible quantity, and we like to persuade ourselves that we can easily fulfil them. As a matter of fact, no less ability is required to attain perfection in little things than in great ones.

The way of perfection which aims at holiness through faithfulness in the least duties was doubtless not unacknowledged in the past, and it was known to lead to true supernatural great-

ness. Is it not written in the Gospel, *Qui fidelis est in minimo et in majori fidelis est* (*He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful in that which is greater*)? And how many saints have followed this road! But the great merit, the peculiar genius, the wholly providential mission of little St Teresa of the Child Jesus was to have seen more clearly than ever before that all too neglected sanctity of littleness which overtakes the sanctity of greatness. When studying Sœur Thérèse's life, one notices with some surprise that she had been predestined by providence to practise in a high degree and in some sort to reveal to us the primordial importance of that Gospel counsel—to be faithful in that which is least—*fidelis in minimo*. We are told that at the age when children are so proud to be "getting big" Teresa was sorry that she could not remain a little girl. So that insight into the beauty, the power, the value hidden in littleness was part of her genius. Yet how difficult it is to set a proper value on littleness! As Pascal wrote: "The infinite of greatness is far more perceptible." It strikes our eyes, our imagination, it is sensational, whereas we overlook the infinite of littleness, we see nothing to wonder at in it; it passes unnoticed until it is pointed out to us, and then we marvel at its power. Is it not by the study of things infinitely little that science is being renewed in our days, and to our consternation it

has been discovered that the smaller they are the more formidable they are.

For the great exceptional and intermittent penances which, as we have said, St Teresa of the Child Jesus banishes from her way of littleness, of spiritual childhood, she substitutes mortification carried to extremes in the smallest things.

3. How the Asceticism of Littleness corrected Thérèse's faulty tendencies in childhood and in girlhood.

When she was about three years old Teresa was given a string of beads on purpose to count her acts of self-denial. "It is most interesting," wrote her mother, "to see Teresa putting her hand into her pocket many times a day to pull one of the beads on her chaplet every time she makes a sacrifice." The little girl used to call the virtuous acts she counted in this way her practices. We must not be above admiring such precocity in the matter of mortification, any more than we should refuse to value the precocity of a Mozart in the harmony of music. St Teresa of the Child Jesus' characteristic genius already appears in this appreciation of and devotion to little acts of self-denial. If we could only know what thorough knowledge of self, and, above all, what mastery over self such mortification would give us, we should value it more. The saint of the little way is quite sincere in writing: "I was then, I think, in the same dispositions as now, and I had already great command over my actions. For instance, I had acquired the habit of never complaining when anything of

mine was taken away from me; or again, when I was unjustly accused, I chose rather to be silent than to make excuses for myself." To be silent when one had only to say one word to prove one's innocence, what self-possession does that not imply in a child of a naturally proud and resolute character, which already concealed tendencies to haughtiness and masterfulness.

In any unforeseen circumstance Thérèse showed her individuality. She would not have kissed the ground for a fortune. Her "stubbornness was wellnigh unconquerable; one might shut her up in the cellar for a whole day without getting a 'yes' out of her. She would sooner spend the night there."

"Mine was not an easy character," she used to say afterwards. Her sisters wrote in her abridged *Life* that the child "was inclined to be proud, quick tempered, and independent." From a merely external and casual point of view she was a very pretty little girl, exceptionally gifted, her charming face lit up by two large bluish-grey eyes, and framed with a sort of halo of golden curls. But we know that we must be careful of these fair-haired children, these gentle and angelic temperaments, apparently incapable of any angry outburst, of pride, of lust, yet which soon are shown to be surprisingly touchy, proud, fiery, and passionate. St Teresa of the Child Jesus invariably considered and asserted that a bad bringing up would probably have sent

her to her ruin. *Corruptio optimi pessima,* said the ancients. The saint who to-day is famed throughout the world for her heroic virtues, had it not been for her exemplary parents and the grace of God, might have been lost and have been the means of bringing others to perdition. "My little sisters," she exclaimed, "if you had not brought me up properly, instead of seeing in me what you do, what a sorry creature you would have seen!"

One of her most characteristic traits—one might almost say the dominant feature—in Thérèse as a child was the exceptional need she felt of loving, of loving passionately and tenderly. "As Pauline seemed to me to be so far away, I thought of no one else from morning to night. When I was only just beginning to speak and mother used to ask me, 'What are you thinking about?' the answer was invariably: 'About Pauline!'" One morning Thérèse managed to get out of her little bed all by herself and went and hid beside her sister Céline. The nurse looked for her to dress her. At last she found her out, and the child said as she kissed her sister and clasped her tight in her arms: "Let me alone, Louise; you see we two are like little white hens, we cannot be parted."

In childhood such cravings for affection are charming and provoke a smile. But in adolescence how dangerous they become! We shall

see how vigilantly the saint was to wage war on the tendency to form affectionate attachments.

Some feminine coquetry, although severely repressed at an early age, was also found in the little girl in its instinctive and latent stage:

"Another time we were to go into the country to visit some friends. Mother told Marie to dress me in my prettiest frock, but not to leave my arms bare. I said never a word, and even showed the indifference proper to a child of that age; but to myself I said: 'All the same, I would have looked much nicer with my little arms bare!'"

Many Catholics, who in so doing unconsciously detract from the merits of St Teresa of the Child Jesus, will persist in the belief that she was born a saint and that she did not have to struggle. We must fulfil our whole duty and do our utmost to disabuse them. She was thirteen years old when, on account of illness, she had to be taken away from her boarding-school and was entrusted to a lady who undertook to finish her education. She had some excellent lessons, she said:

"In that room, with its old-world furniture, surrounded with lesson-books, I was often present when company came. My governess' mother bore the brunt of the conversation as far as possible; all the same, I did not learn much on those days. Buried in my books, I heard everything, even things it would have been better for me not to have heard. One lady would say that I had beautiful hair; another, as she was leaving, would ask 'Who was that very pretty girl?' And the words, all the more

flattering because not said before me, left an impression of pleasure which showed me plainly how full of conceit I was."

Even in her fourteenth year, just before she entered Carmel and during her pilgrimage to Rome, the girl had to watch over herself and curb her freely affectionate and grateful nature. She was not less gifted in this respect than St Teresa or St Mary Magdalen; she was to love our Lord as much as they, but she, too, might have proved frail had it not been for her upbringing and the grace of God. She was fully aware of this and saw it clearly. "Oh, it is high time our Lord took me from the poisoned air of the world, for I feel my heart would easily succumb to affection. And where others are lost I myself would be lost, for we are all equally weak."

How did a nature so gifted, but not exempt from original sin, attain to sanctity? The saint tells us repeatedly that she owed it primarily to an early upbringing which was attentive to every detail.

It should be noted that this upbringing prepared her for that faithfulness in the way of little things which we have already pointed out. The manner or method of bringing up children has varied with the centuries. In the seventeenth century the sons of the most aristocratic families, and even the Dauphin himself, were very harshly used and were often caned or flogged. Thérèse's

mother, who was gifted with intelligence above the average and with rare energy, had brought up her daughters in a very different way. She had kept over them a watch which was as firm as it was gentle, though never relaxed for an instant. She never "let a fault pass uncorrected." When Madame Martin died, the eldest daughter, Pauline, who was about ten years older than Thérèse, and had inherited her mother's gentleness, firmness, and method of upbringing, brought up her little sister in the exact performance of the smallest duties.

"I wonder," wrote the saint to her who was her little mother, "how you managed to bring me up so affectionately without spoiling me, for you never overlooked a single defect. You never scolded me without a reason, but neither did you, as I very well knew, ever go back upon anything once it had been settled."

Monsieur Martin, their father, who was kindness itself, and who loved Thérèse with a tender affection unusual in a man, upheld with his full authority the watchfulness shown in his little daughter's bringing up. "When a servant accused Thérèse of anything, the maid was *a priori* held to be in the right, and the 'little queen' had to ask pardon, sometimes quite unjustly, and this to teach her respect for grown-up people. She had also been trained to ask leave for everything." "When my father asked her to go out with him she always answered: 'I'll go and ask leave from Pauline.' If I re-

fused she would sometimes cry because of my father, who would have been glad to go out with her; but she obeyed without question." A bringing up like this, unflagging in its unceasing watchfulness, never for an instant relaxed, which enjoined obedience and respect for authority in the smallest details, is of the right sort. It is far superior and preferable to the old method of violent but intermittent punishments.

It was not long before Thérèse made her own the principle of doing one's duty in the smallest matters, of seeking perfection in little acts of self-denial, which she had imbibed from her mother and her elder sisters. A few months before her first Communion her sister Pauline, who at Carmel had become Sœur Agnès de Jésus, sent her a little notebook, in which she began to enter her small acts of virtue. In three months she reckoned up to 818 sacrifices, an average of thirty sacrifices a day. Later, Sœur Thérèse was to come to the opinion that such arithmetical methods, her practices, were better suited to childhood than to youth or mature age. But what she was always to retain—and perhaps on this point we shall have to alter some of our preconceived and scornful opinions—was the infinite profit of a method which constantly mortifies us in little things.

" Oh, how few devout people there are," she exclaimed, " who do everything thoroughly, and do not say to themselves: ' I am not bound to do this or that . . . after

all, there is no great harm in speaking here, in doing as one likes there, and so on. . . .' How few people do always their best!"

Thérèse's constant mortification and reserve at school even then gave an impression of greatness. "From the point of view of faithfulness to the rules and regulations," one of her mistresses attests, "she was truly heroic. It was difficult to keep a strict watch over some of the staircases in the school building. Her companions played many tricks. Thérèse remained recollected and was minutely faithful." To be minutely faithful in little things beyond count is indeed a proof of generosity. One of the oldest and most thoughtful of Thérèse's companions asked her one day if she had not broken silence. "She answered that she never had done so, and as, partly to tease her, I pretended to doubt her truthfulness, she became very sad and said: 'Marie, I never tell untruths.'" So she neither broke silence nor told untruths.

If Thérèse was not happy at school it was not because the education the Benedictine Dames gave her was lacking in any way; on the contrary, it was excellent, both affectionate and devoted. But Thérèse dreaded "the contact with flighty pupils who would not keep the rules."[1] At the age of thirteen the girl already

[1] There must be no misunderstanding as to this point. Perhaps the little Thérèse was never quite happy except at home, yet the Benedictines with whom she was at school

understood, better than we could have done, the beauty and the greatness of perfect faithfulness to the regulations, even in the smallest injunction. "Her mortification at this period," we are told, "was momentary and extended to the least things." On the eve of her admittance into the Lisieux Carmel, when she was just fifteen years old, her entrance was delayed for three months. After having obtained the permission she had won at the price of so many struggles, and, as she herself put it in the language so personal to her, "at the point of the sword"; having, in fact, carried the day, she was for a moment tempted to relax a little and rest on her laurels for a few weeks. But her conscience showed her how perilous such relaxation might prove, and she forthwith pulled herself up.

"At first the idea came into my head to take it easy, not to lead so strict a life as usual; then God made me understand what a boon was the time offered to me, and I resolved to give myself over more than ever to an earnest and mortified life. When I say mortified, I do not mean the penances of the saints. Far from resembling those great souls who from childhood practised all sorts of macerations, I made mine consist solely in breaking my will, in curbing a quick answer, in doing many

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were very fond of her. If we will only take the pains to visualize it, the saint herself gives a charming picture in the following lines: "Every night the first mistress used to come with her little lantern, draw the bed-curtains and kiss me on the forehead. She showed such affection for me that one night, overcome by her kindness, I said to her: 'O Dame, I love you very much.'"

little services to those about me without calling attention to them, and a number of other things of that kind. By practising these trifles, I prepared myself to become the betrothed of our Lord, and I cannot tell you how much this time of waiting caused me to grow in self-surrender, in humility, and in other virtues."

How true is all this, and how well expressed! Sœur Thérèse instinctively hits on the most exact expressions, even from the philosophical and doctrinal view-point. It is, indeed, the practice of little trifles which makes her grow. The mortifications she practises, which are not the penances of the saints, but acts of self-denial, have started her on a "race of giant's strides."

4. *The Asceticism of Littleness practised by Sœur Thérèse at the Lisieux Carmel.*

At the age of fifteen years and three months, on April 9, 1888, Thérèse crossed the enclosure door of the Carmel of Lisieux. How will this girl bear herself, the schoolgirl of yesterday, who never broke silence, and who was so grieved in soul to see the rules violated and contemned? We might warn the nuns of the Lisieux convent and tell them: "Mind the child who is entering your community; she will observe your constitutions with such scrupulous and unwearying faithfulness that you will be amazed at her." And, in fact, Sœur Thérèse instinctively divined the essential points of the Carmelite rule. In the first place, she set herself never to break the law of silence. St Teresa of the Child Jesus understood as perfectly as any founder of an Order the sovereign efficacy of silence, which ever has

been and ever will be one of the primary bases of the ascetic life, without which there can be no real or deep interior life. This is why she professed an esteem for religious silence which may well surprise—nay, shame us; she had a real cult for it. Take this passage from the evidence in the canonization process, which deserves to be written in letters of gold on the title-page of any study of the saint's ascetic and mystical life :

" Her chief means was silence. She had learnt it from our Lady, whose example filled her with rapture, especially when she chose rather to be under suspicion than to excuse herself to St Joseph by revealing to him the mystery of the Incarnation. . . . Like Mary, she loved to keep all things in her heart, her joys as well as her sorrows. This reserve was her strength, the starting-point of her perfection, and the outward mark which distinguished her from others by its evenness."

The first few days after entering Carmel, Thérèse's elder sister was sent to teach her how to recite the divine Office; that is, how to find the appointed psalms, the proper or common antiphons, the commemorations, and the like. At the end of three weeks the saint kindly but firmly dismissed Sœur Marie du Sacré-Cœur. "Thank you very much; I found my places all right today. I should like to stay with you, but I must deprive myself of this pleasure, for we are no longer at Les Buissonnets." There is surely in such behaviour a lesson in much which might offer food for reflection even to an old nun. Little Sœur Thérèse does indeed take the re-

ligious life seriously. "At the first sound of the bell she stopped writing, even in the middle of a word. 'I have kept a note from her,' says her elder sister, 'which ends thus: "I must leave you, nine o'clock is strik . . ." But when one day she saw me finish jotting down a precious piece of advice, she said to me: "It would be far better to sacrifice that and obey the rule. If one only knew what it means!"'" In the most observant communities some of the nuns occasionally prolong the time for speaking to visitors in the parlour, and exchange a few words after, or tell one another their impressions. Sometimes, too, the Mother Prioress tempers the monastic discipline somewhat, and if she meets a nun in the cloisters she tells her any important news she may have heard. But in the parlour, when the hour-glass marked the end of the time allowed for the visit, Sœur Thérèse was always the first to rise, and then would go straight to her cell with all gravity.

"She seemed to live beyond time, and never showed any interest in news or talk unless charity or the rule made it a duty to do so. She took no notice of groups and passed by without stopping, her eyes cast down, and with that religious bearing which marked her out from others."

Her recollected air, her entire and spontaneous faithfulness to the rule, was not, as one might fear, the passing fervour of a neophyte; the little postulant's steadfastness never relaxed, never

altered. "Not a break, not a moment of flightiness or remissness." Great was the impression this made on the best of the nuns. Such heroic faithfulness was striking in its sublime simplicity. "I was mistress of novices at the time. From her very entrance the Servant of God surprised the community by her bearing, which was stamped with a kind of majesty all unlooked for in a child of fifteen." One might fancy that this is an exaggerated appreciation; then take the evidence of Mère Agnès de Jésus, Thérèse's little mother: even she was amazed at the postulant's unexpected attitude:

"When they saw how eagerly I endeavoured to obtain her admission, they said: 'How very rash to allow so young a child to enter Carmel! What an imagination that Sœur Agnès de Jésus has got! She will be nicely disillusioned!' But the nuns, who for the most part only expected to see an ordinary child, were as though struck with respect in her presence. There was something about her person so noble, so resolute, so unassuming that I myself was taken by surprise."

To revert to our initial remark. What was it that gave the oldest and withal the most fervent of the nuns that impression of greatness about little Sœur Thérèse de l'Enfant-Jésus? Was it, as in the case of so many saints and *beatae* of the thirteenth century and later, the practice of exceptional mortifications? By no means. But it was, though they were not always aware of it, the minute, literal observance of every injunction and custom, her persevering care not to let

slip any little act of self-denial. It is, again, that sanctity of littleness which by a striking contrast soon attains a gentle, affecting majesty. Even the convent gardener never failed to recognize the little sister under her veil, because she walked with such perfect recollection, with even and unhurried step, the step of a saint.

Yet the nuns who lived with Sœur Thérèse de l'Enfant-Jesus—both those who observed her less sympathetically, or who were on the watch to surprise her in some weakness, and those who loved her and admired her the most—did not know her full virtue, nor to what minute details she carried her self-denial. Her perfection was indeed consummate. Her acts of self-denial were as countless as the grains of sand. Only on her deathbed was St Teresa of the Child Jesus to reveal to her novices and her own sisters the distant ramifications of her perfection. The largest trees thrust their countless tiny hidden roots deep into the bowels of the earth, and thus it was with Sœur Thérèse: the roots of her holiness were plunged in depths of humility and self-sacrifice. She was to own later that what she had most suffered from physically was cold. "I have suffered so much from cold," she said, "that I have sometimes thought I should die of it." Now, the novice mistress who had lived beside Sœur Thérèse for months, who had watched her, studied her, received her confidences, bore witness in the canonization process:

"I never knew that Sœur Thérèse de l'Enfant-Jésus suffered from cold." How could a trial which was a martyrdom remain unknown? To begin with, on principle the saint never spoke unnecessarily of her sufferings. Her eldest sister records: "I never once heard her complain of being cold." Above all, she was very plucky as well as very delicate in her self-denial. She taught her novices, when it was freezing, not to shiver in the unheated passages and cells, not to walk about bent and doubled up, as chilly people instinctively do, and not to rub their hands together. Sœur Thérèse was, of course, simply teaching them her own practice, her way. One can understand then how it was that no one could tell that she felt the cold.

By such constant acts of self-denial, hidden from mortal eyes and known only to God, the saint lived in the other world and laid up a vast reserve of extraordinary energy in her soul. She noticed that one of her sisters, whenever her patience was exhausted, sought consolation from the Mother Prioress, and said to her: "You wound your soul by so doing, you sap its strength. . . . One ought to rise above what is said or done around us. We ought to so live in our monastery as if we were to spend only a couple of days in it." A true and wise thought indeed! If we open our heart for mere trifles, if we pour ourselves out, we wound it, we make it bleed and lose our strength. True, there are

ulcers which must be lanced, operations which are a necessity, but they should only be resorted to in serious or urgent cases. It is also very true that, if we keep our little acts of self-denial to ourselves, and do them in the sight of God and his saints, we rise above earth, we live heart and soul in heaven.

To recall the acts of self-denial and mortification of every kind which St Teresa of the Child Jesus inflicted on herself during the nine years of her religious life would be a task which might last indefinitely and, so to speak, to all eternity. We may, however, glean at random in the field of self-denial tilled by Sœur Thérèse the ears which are little known to the public or have been overlooked, and the sheaf we shall gather in a few moments will give us some idea of the rich harvest. We shall also better grasp what the sanctity of littleness is and how it rejoins the sanctity of greatness.

In a Carmelite convent the nuns may not read or look at any books or papers they may happen upon. One day Sœur Thérèse's eyes chanced to fall upon the open pages of a fashion paper, and she looked at them. She accused herself of this imperfection as of a fault. She never wiped the handle of her knife if it happened to be sticky, a mortification which cost her sensitive delicacy a great deal. She never wiped her face when she was hot, unless absolutely necessary, in order not to attract the nuns' attention to the

discomfort she felt. The novices did not notice this until she taught them to do likewise. She never crossed her legs or her feet. She used to sip the nastiest medicines drop by drop. She would not let herself read a letter in praise of one of her poems. She would purposely go past some of the cells in order to put herself out and do some tiresome little service. She used to give up her turn for direction when her "little mother" was Prioress. She was the nun who saw her least. In the refectory, when she was helping Sœur Agnès de Jésus, she never spoke a word to her which did not bear on their work. "O Mother," she exclaimed later, "what I suffered then! I could not open my heart to you, and I thought you no longer knew me." At the beginning of her religious life Sœur Thérèse had been very fond of nice neat things and utensils. She mortified her tastes by choosing out the ugliest. The more worn and patched was the coarse habit she wore, the better she liked it. Her alpagates or sandals had been so darned that the stuff of which they were made was no longer visible. The saint's eldest sister wanted to keep them as relics, but a lay sister who was helping her said, "You shan't keep that rubbish," and threw them into the fire. The loss is irreparable, for they bore signal witness to her love of poverty. St Francis of Assisi would have indeed loved and understood Sœur Thérèse. When any dish was tasteless,

warmed up, or insufficient in quantity, they would say in the kitchen: "No one will have this; it had better be given to Sœur Thérèse de l'Enfant-Jésus." Even when she felt most tired the saint never asked for any dispensation. She used to put out the foot-warmer the doctor ordered during her illness, as soon as the air became a little warmer. "If I had done what you have just done," she said to a novice who had put her sandals on a foot-warmer without having been told to do so, "I should consider I had been very immortified. What will it avail us to have embraced a life of austerity if we try to seek relief whenever anything might cause us to suffer?" For her own use Sœur Thérèse chose, as far as possible, the poorest things—ordinary pins, for instance, avoiding those with glass heads. And eventually she chose for herself a little worn-out lamp, the wick of which could only be pulled up with a pin. She wrote her poems on old envelopes or scraps of paper.

5. The Asceticism of Littleness should not be carried so far as to become an obsession, nor should it exclude mortifications prescribed by rule.

Strong-minded folk will say that asceticism of this kind will beget all sorts of minutiæ. And they will recall the old Roman adage: *De minimis non curat praetor* (Great men reck little of trifles). We must be careful not to misconstrue the saying. Pascal is right in saying that we are inclined to contemn the infinite of littleness out of haughtiness and pride, whereas it is as important in any order of things as the infinite of greatness, with which, more-

over, it is allied. And the Gospel is infallibly true when it teaches: *Qui fidelis est in minimo et in majori fidelis est.* We should not hesitate to assert that of all the saints, men and women, with the exception of our Lady and St Joseph, St Teresa of the Child Jesus was the most faithful *in minimo,* and this is the characteristic and specific cause of her unparalleled and eternal greatness.

In order, however, to give a complete account of Sœur Thérèse's asceticism and her way of spiritual childhood, we ought in conclusion to make two necessary comments.

In their quest for little and continual acts of self-denial the saint was careful to warn the souls entrusted to her care to avoid being obsessed thereby. "She would have no obsessing mortifications," we are told, "which might hinder the mind from due attention to God. . . . She assiduously practised custody over the eyes, yet without any constraint." She ever kept in her mortification of every moment the liberty of the children of God, knowing that what we offer of our own accord to our Lord is not always asked of us, still less enjoined upon us. Her firmness, her strictness even, were perfectly compatible with great breadth of mind. She was as little jansenistical as it is possible to be.

"The servant of God displayed no unyielding rigorism on the subject of lawful pleasures. Herein as in everything she acted with simplicity and did not hesitate

to bless God in his works. . . . She liked to touch fruits, especially peaches, and admired their velvety skin; she liked, too, to distinguish the different scents of flowers. . . . She would have considered it a want of simplicity not to enjoy such things, when she felt drawn by a loving or grateful thought to God by the charms of nature, or of music, etc. . . ."

We repeat, the quest of perfection in the direction of littleness is not less arduous than in that of greatness, and one must act with discretion and according to one's strength. Little souls should not all at once try to lift the yoke which St Teresa of the Child Jesus bore so easily and so gaily. They should go forward gradually, and should not take upon themselves more acts of self-denial than they can perform with joy and liberty of mind, and they will soon be inured to it. That is the right way.

We should also note with as much care that these numerous little acts of self-denial which dispense us from extraordinary mortifications and macerations do not by any means exclude the fasting and abstinence or the penances enjoined by the Church or the religious Orders. Sœur Thérèse kept the strictest fasts with the perfection she brought to everything. She took the discipline three times a week, scourging herself with all the strength and the speed of which she was capable, smiling at the crucifix through the tears which bedewed her eyelashes. One of the sisters very truly observed that nature instinctively stiffens and makes us adopt atti-

tudes which lessen the pain. Sœur Thérèse answered her: "On the contrary, I keep my body supple, so that the discipline may hurt me as much as possible." The saint, as we see, neither contemned nor abolished the penances enjoined by her rule, and she further admitted that souls in some other mansion than hers might practise exceptional mortifications, both self-imposed and extraordinary.

In a general way, like all the great minds in the Catholic Church who have renewed asceticism and the spiritual life, St Teresa of the Child Jesus kept in the first place all that was best in the Christian tradition. From the Fathers of the desert she took the love of silence and of her cell, avoiding all unnecessary talking or comings and goings. Like the saints of the thirteenth and following centuries, she used the discipline and some other instruments of penance; she kept the strict observance of fasting and abstinence which was always commended both in the Old and the New Testaments. Finally, most important of all, she renewed all such asceticism by the utmost faithfulness and generosity in offering little acts of self-denial. By the daily and continual practice of the smallest mortifications she fitted herself to embrace with the utmost generosity, as we shall see later, every sort of martyrdom.

"The way that I want to teach souls," she declared in one of her last memorable sayings, which form, as it were, her mystical will and

testament, "is the Way of Spiritual Childhood, the path of confidence and entire self-surrender. I want to point out to them the little means which I have found so entirely successful, to tell them that there is only one thing to be done here on earth, that is to cast before our Lord the flowers of little acts of self-denial."

Modern spirituality cannot dispense with asceticism or mortification. If, by reason of our enfeebled constitutions, watching, abstinence, macerations, long fasts are forbidden us, at least let us practise the asceticism of littleness. Let us begin with silence; master our tongue, keep the secret of our soul—this is the main thing. Let us enclose ourselves sometimes and avoid unnecessary visits or business. Let us endure in patience the humours, the faults of our neighbours. And lastly, let us bear with ourselves, with our countless defects of mind and body, trusting in God's infinite mercy. By this way of childhood, of surrender, and of love we shall attain to true greatness.

CHAPTER II

THE SECOND NEGATIVE CHARACTERISTIC OF SŒUR THÉRÈSE'S SPIRITUALITY : NO FIXED METHODS OF MEDITATION : HER LIFE OF UNION WITH OUR LORD IN THE BLESSED SACRAMENT

1. St Ignatius' and St Francis de Sales' methods of prayer.

St Teresa of the Child Jesus neither adopted nor devised for her own use any method of prayer in the strict sense of the word. Read through her autobiography, her letters, her poems, the whole *Summarium* of the cause of beatification; you will not come across a single page or piece of evidence which so much as alludes to any method of prayer. Thus the absence of fixed methods of prayer is one of the most significant, though negative, characteristics of our saint's spirituality. Her way of praying is, again, a simplification, a return to the spontaneity, the liberty of the children of God. For many souls who felt bound to follow some precise method in their prayer and meditation Sœur Thérèse's canonization is an emancipation, a landmark in the development and the history of Christian spirituality.

As in all revivals which are not merely a reform but an enriching, it was by reverting in great measure to the sources, to the primitive means of prayer, that Sœur Thérèse gave us a

kind of prayer better suited to our dispositions, our state of mind; in short, to our modern mentality. In the Old and the New Testaments, among the ascetics, the Fathers of the Church, we do not find any method of prayer properly so called. A close study of St Thomas Aquinas' life and of his works, which are the summary and sum of all Christian tradition and teaching, does not reveal any reasoned, precise, or discursive method of meditation. The Thomists and the schoolmen were, of course, both in their studies and in their teaching, fond of method and of classification. Rightly may one be surprised that these men, very devout to boot, should have felt no obligation to adopt a reasoned method of meditation.

One has to come down to the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries—to St Ignatius Loyola, to St Francis de Sales, to the Cardinal de Bérulle, to the Père du Condren, to Monsieur Olier—before one comes across perfectly analytical and co-ordinated methods of prayer. The more reasoned methods then devised met the needs of the age, and this was one of the principal reasons of their success. In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries the scientific or, rather, the mathematical spirit outbalanced the more intuitive and metaphysical tendencies of the Augustinian or scholastic schools. Society and the state were being more strictly organized. It was the triumph of order, of reason, of method.

Descartes was shortly to write his *Discours de la Méthode*, and was to attempt to apply to the whole of philosophy, morals, and religion the precision of the mathematical mind. Vaugelas was to undertake to give a fixed form to the grammar of the French language. Le Nôtre was to lay out the famous gardens and park of Versailles symmetrically and tastefully withal. Be it noted that in this striving after organization the will played a large part. The will and the understanding were, at the end of the sixteenth and during the seventeenth century, the faculties men valued most, though they did not altogether exclude imagination and sentiment. It is easy to understand how it came about that very exact rules for prayer and meditation should be necessary to such minds at such a period.

The most widespread method was unquestionably that of St Ignatius. It has continued to this day to be used, and with advantage, in modern congregations, especially in those devoted to active apostolic work. The first thing in the morning, before the community Mass, the superior, or a nun appointed to take her place, reads the subject of the meditation. The latter begins with a short prayer or invocation; there follow as a rule several preludes, then the three points, divided into several paragraphs, distinct from one another and sometimes numbered; the whole closes with a colloquy and some resolutions. One of the preludes is devoted to the con-

struction or composition of place. For instance, if one is meditating on our Lord's hidden life at Nazareth, one has to form a mental picture of the Holy Family's lowly dwelling and St Joseph's workshop, etc.

The functions of the different faculties in meditation are also carefully distinguished. This is the reason why meditation is called the exercise of the three powers of the soul. The function of the memory : it recalls the points to be meditated upon, our Saviour's words, and ceases to act as soon as the understanding has been enlightened. The function of the understanding : it reflects, reasons, and deducts from principles practical consequences likely to stir up the will to do better. The function of the will : this is the function of holy desires, of good resolutions, of colloquies.

Nevertheless, in order that the meditation may have every chance of producing its full fruit, it is of the utmost importance that it should be carefully prepared. Hence the remote preparation. Before going to sleep the subject is anticipated and divided into two or three points ; while dressing one busies oneself with thoughts suited to the subject ; during the day one avoids wandering thoughts, one keeps custody over one's senses, seeks solitude, makes use of bodily penances to some extent, and remains in darkness and silence. The proximate preparation consists in standing, if possible, a little way off

from the place of meditation and in reflecting on the importance of the action which is to be accomplished in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ. As a prelude to the meditation proper, the body should assume the posture which harmonizes best with the subject chosen. If one is alone one may meditate either sitting or standing, kneeling, or prostrate with one's face to the ground.

St Ignatius distinguishes contemplation from meditation properly so called. In contemplation it is the imagination which is chiefly exercised and which is substituted as the principal faculty for the reason. The imagination is, in truth, able to make up for our other senses; we can see, hear, smell, taste, and touch in imagination. So that, according to the Ignatian method, it is in contemplation that the application of the five senses takes place. For instance, we can, on the subject of hell, successively practise the application of the sight, the hearing, the smell, the taste, the touch. "See in imagination the vast conflagration of hell, the devils adding fuel to the fire which is the abode of the lost; hear the groans, the cries, the blasphemies; imagine that you smell the fumes of sulphur; make your taste realize the thirst, the bitterness of the lost; feel by the touch of your hands, the contact of your whole body, the pain of fire." Such sensible reproduction of the scenes upon which one wishes to meditate is called contemplation.

Whereas meditation principally uses reflection and understanding, contemplation sets the imagination working. It follows that contemplation thus understood is of the sensible order; it is therefore very different, it should be observed in order to avoid material misconceptions, from the mystical contemplation which St John of the Cross so strongly advocates. The latter exists apart from the imagination, the memory, the understanding, and brings about the night of the senses and of the spirit, knitting the soul to God in blind faith and love.

After the meditation or contemplation, St Ignatius advises us carefully to find out whether it has been fruitful. If it should happen that we gain no benefit from it, we ought to find out the reason why. But if, on the other hand, the exercise has been efficacious, we ought to thank God for his graces.

St Francis de Sales, in his *Introduction à la Vie Dévote,* undertakes to teach Philothée a method of meditation "in a few rules." But to the modern reader, all haste and impatience where religious instruction is concerned, these few rules would seem too many. If Monsieur Hamon's biography of the saint had not already enlightened us, we should at once discern at the first reading that St Ignatius' method was greatly prized by St Francis de Sales. The points of resemblance are, indeed, somewhat striking. The Bishop of Geneva divides the preparation

for prayer into three parts, which correspond to the preludes. In the third part of the preparation he especially recommends the composition of place: "An exercise of the imagination whereby one makes a picture of the mystery or the event on which one is meditating, as though it were actually happening before our eyes." The second part, or body of the meditation consists in the exercise of the understanding, which produces various considerations or reasonings. The third part sets the will in action through the affections and acts of love. The prayer ends with three acts: the first an act of thanksgiving, the second an act of offering, the third an act of supplication. After that one prays for the Church, the clergy, one's relations and friends. And lastly, "one gathers a little nosegay of devotion and selects four or five flowers to keep and smell during the day; that is to say, two or three thoughts which we have found most suited to us and most profitable to our progress."

Given the reputation for sweet simplicity enjoyed by St Francis de Sales, we might have looked for a somewhat shorter method of prayer. Four ways of placing oneself in the presence of God, three points in the preparation, the exercise of the imagination, the understanding, and the will in succession; three acts at the close, besides the prayer and the spiritual bouquet composed of three to four flowers or thoughts; all this makes a good many subdivisions. But when one

begins to subdivide and co-ordinate any subject it is very difficult to know where to stop.[1]

Such methods of meditation are, without question, valuable and to many minds even indispensable. The *Exercises* of St Ignatius are plainly the work of a mighty genius; they have done incalculable good and are highly efficacious for people in the world who can only spare a few days of retreat. They should not, however, be prescribed for all without distinction. Sœur Thérèse de l'Enfant-Jésus was to simplify and deliver spontaneous and intuitive souls from the yoke of precise methods which they are no longer able to bear. She was fond of quoting in this connection: *In my Father's house are many mansions.*

2. *Sœur Thérèse's life of prayer.*

Little Thérèse had been very devout from her childhood. We see her, when playing at hermits with her cousin Marie, attempting first the active and then the contemplative life. One may say that this was simply a game. True, but children's games so often reveal the inmost bent of their nature. Yet here is another more significant trait: In summer-time Monsieur Martin often used to take Thérèse out fishing, for Monsieur Martin was fond of fishing, and liked to

[1] In one of his letters the saint writes: "Your kind of prayer is excellent, far better than if you were to make reflections and discourses. The secret of secrets in prayer is to follow one's call in all simplicity of heart. The best prayer is that which keeps us busied with God, so that we neither think of ourselves, nor of what we are doing."

send his catch to some religious community. What did Thérèse do during the long hours of waiting?

"Sometimes I would try to fish myself with my tiny rod, but generally I preferred to sit by myself on the flower-strewn grass. My thoughts then became really deep, and without knowing what meditation was, my soul was absorbed in prayer. I listened to the distant sounds, the murmur of the wind. Sometimes a few vague strains from a military band were wafted from the town, and made me feel sad and pensive. Earth seemed to me a place of exile, and I dreamt of heaven."

The saint says herself that she is speaking here of real prayer. This prayer is no reasoned contemplation, but imaginative, somewhat sentimental, perhaps, and poetical; there is a slight tinge of melancholy coupled with the feeling of exile on earth and the longing for heaven. We know that Thérèse's intelligence was exceptionally precocious. Yet for all her spontaneous and fresh intelligence, her intuition overruled and dominated her reason. Not that Thérèse did not know how to ask and to give good reasons, but her best reasons were generally her heart's reasons.

When she was about eight or ten years old this child of election, as demure as a maiden of thirteen or fourteen, became more and more devout. The vocal prayers she said with such fervour no longer contented her, and she instinctively sought some higher mode of prayer to

draw her closer to God. She first asked her sister Marie to teach her a method of prayer, but her elder sister, who thought Thérèse was inclined to be too thoughtful, wisely refused.

"At this time she asked me if she might make half an hour's prayer every day. I would not allow her to do so; then she asked for a quarter of an hour, but I would not even allow that. I thought she was so devout that it almost frightened me, so to speak. I was afraid lest God should take her to himself."

But a God-sent instinct was leading Thérèse; she felt there was some wonderful mystery to be discovered, and that is why she never tired of seeking and of inquiring. At school the president of the Children of Mary was one of her oldest friends, very devout and most valued. One day Thérèse came and unbosomed herself to her. She had a question to ask. "Marguerite," she said, "I wish you would teach me how to make a meditation." Thérèse was nine years old. The president of the Children of Mary owns that she was "astonished and greatly perplexed into the bargain." It is not so easy to give an answer offhand to someone who suddenly asks for a method of prayer.

Even then, at the age of nine, Thérèse was thinking in all seriousness of the religious and contemplative vocation of the Carmelite life. She went to confession on great feasts. She left the confessional "happy and light-hearted"; the avowal of her faults and the absolution

"filled her little soul with joy." A little later she intuitively discovered the kind of prayer they refused to teach her, somewhat as in a very different order of things another child-genius, Pascal, had discovered mathematics. And just as he used to retire to his room and find out geometry, so Thérèse used to shut herself up in a kind of alcove in her room to make her prayer.

"One day a mistress at the Abbey asked me what I did on holidays when I stayed at Les Buissonets. I answered shyly: 'I often hide in a recess in my room, where I can shut myself in with the bed curtains, and then I think.' 'But what do you think about?' said the good nun, laughing. 'I think about the good God, about the shortness of life, about eternity; in fact, I think.' Now, I know that I was really praying, whilst my Divine Master gently instructed me."

Céline had made her first Communion the year before, and Thérèse had thenceforth no greater longing than to be united to our Lord. We already see signs in the saint's soul of that eucharistic devotion which was to wax ever stronger and inspire her boldest prayers. She was eagerly longing for her eleventh year, the age then requisite for first Communion. She asked her sister Marie one Christmas Day if she could not slip in among the faithful in the communicant's bench. "No one would see me," she said. Her love for the Holy Eucharist saw nothing impossible in this, and overcame her extreme shyness. If she had not been held back

she would have run to stop the Bishop of Bayeux, Mgr. Hugonin, in the street, to beg leave to make her first Communion without further delay. The more one studies Sœur Thérèse's life and doctrine, the more surprised one is to find how far she was in advance of her times, and modern, in the best sense of the word. It was in admiration of the saint's precocious love for Communion and her longing for frequent Communion that Pius X rose and exclaimed: *Opportunissimo, opportunissimo!*

One ought to read in the autobiography how fervently Thérèse prepared herself for her first Communion, and how high her feelings soared during the ceremony. Her thanksgiving was an "outpouring." Thérèse shed copious tears of delight. Supernaturally enlightened, she understood Communion in that wide sense of the word which includes the communion of saints. Through her union with our Lord she felt she was united to the departed, the absent. "In receiving a visit from our Lord, I received one from my darling Mother too. . . . I no longer wept because Pauline was not there; we were more closely united than ever." What a commentary on those words of St Paul to the Corinthians: *For we, being many, are one bread, one body: all that partake of one bread.* Surely such a thanksgiving, so often to be renewed henceforth, was the best of all prayers. For what is prayer but a kind of communion

with the thought, the love, the will of Christ, with his whole divine Person?

Sœur Thérèse's entirely contemplative prayer is therefore something quite different from discursive meditation, methodically and logically co-ordinated, with preludes, divisions, and subdivisions. Sœur Thérèse's wholly spontaneous and intuitive genius was averse to any too rigid discipline. Her mind was subtle rather than mathematical. "French history and composition," her mistresses tell us, "were her favourite studies; she found grammar and arithmetic very dry, and she was rather weak in spelling." Neither had she a good memory for words, and found it difficult to learn by heart, though she perfectly understood and remembered the meaning of things. Even in prayer, for all her docility, it was very difficult for her, even morally and physically impossible, to follow a pious exercise literally. At school her companions did not always understand her, and taxed her with not following the Mass properly. Her attention seemed to be constantly wandering, and she was corrected; she would return to her book, but very soon her soul took flight and soared aloft again. She had her elevations: *Ascensiones in corde suo disposuit.* But this was not known until later. The chaplain, Canon Domin, owns that he "maintained an attitude of reserve, for, as he considered people had an exaggerated opinion of this child, he did not

want to join in the concert of praise and did not believe in her extraordinary virtue." He recalls the following trait:

"She was supposed not to follow the Mass on Sundays very well; this statement requires some explanation. Children are generally expected to follow the different points of the Mass by reading their prayer-book. Thérèse was expected to do this, but the dear child did not do it. . . . When she was shown what she was to read, she thanked one with a charming smile, lowered her eyes to the book for a few moments, and soon raised her head again as if her attention were wandering. But of course her attention had not wandered. She was praying much better than her companions by giving herself to contemplative prayer."[1]

If Thérèse could not follow "the points of the Mass by reading her prayer-book," how could she have restricted herself to a method of meditation with preludes, three points, and short paragraphs? "By this means," wrote St Francis de Sales, "we shut up our mind in the mystery on which we would meditate, neither more nor less than we shut up a bird in a cage." But there are birds one cannot shut up in cages,

[1] The saint had a great love of the Divine Office: "I can truly say that the Divine Office has been at once my joy and my torment, because I longed to recite it without a mistake, and for all my application, I sometimes made some. . . ." She sometimes made mistakes in the rubrics too. "I have sometimes known myself," she confided to someone at the close of her life, "just when I was about to say some portion of the Office which I had carefully marked and prepared, pass it over without opening my mouth through an involuntary distraction."

for they die in them, just because they are homesick for the open air and sky. *Who will give me wings like a dove, and I shall fly away and be at rest?* In the matter of prayer, as in that of mortification, St Teresa appears as the pattern and the saint of all the little souls who cannot in any way be tied down to complicated methods. It was the life of the soul she sought, not fine words.

"Apart from the Divine Office," she wrote, "which, despite my unworthiness, is a daily joy, I have not the courage to look through books for beautiful prayers: I only get a headache, there are so many of them, and, besides, they are all more lovely one than another. Since I cannot say all of them, and do not know which to choose, I do as children do who have not learnt to read—I simply tell our Lord what I want to say, and he always understands me."

In childhood Sœur Thérèse had been very fond of books. She would have been of an eager and inquiring turn of mind. But she mortified her curiosity and became as little "booky" as it is possible to be. It is another sign among many others of her wholly creative and inventive genius. One of her sisters tells us the following charming little episode, which is most significant:

"One day, as we were standing in front of a bookcase, she said with her usual cheerfulness: 'I should be very sorry to have read all those books; I should only have puzzled my head over them and have lost the precious time I have spent simply in loving God.'"

The sally thus uttered in her charming, merry way was the expression of a considered conviction, the fruit of much thought and experience. The proof thereof is that the saint wrote in the same strain to one of the missionaries to whom her life was especially consecrated:

"Sometimes when I read books in which the way to perfection appears to be obstructed by countless obstacles, my poor little head soon gets tired, and I shut the learned tome, which puzzles my head and dries up my heart. . . . I leave the fine books I cannot understand, still less put in practice, to great and lofty minds, and rejoice in my littleness, because "only little children and those who are like them shall be admitted to the heavenly banquet." Fortunately, the kingdom of heaven is made up of many mansions, for if there were only those—to me—incomprehensible mansions with their baffling roads, I certainly should never enter there. . . ."

It would be no rash judgement to presume that among the little souls who read the above assertion in the saint's autobiography there will be some who will infer therefrom the uselessness of all books on mystical theology. It shows how careful one ought to be in interpreting the saint's words. She has only criticized the books "in which the way of perfection appears to be obstructed by countless obstacles," and she took good care not to disparage the "fine books" of the Scriptures.

3. *Sœur Thérèse's spiritual books.*

Many little souls would no doubt class St John of the Cross's mystical treatises among "the fine books one cannot understand." Did not the

saint himself own that "the subject-matter, which in itself is good and quite necessary, presents an appearance of obscurity, and will never attract the crowd?" For all this Sœur Thérèse had made these learned treatises her bedside books for two whole years. "What light have I not drawn from the works of St John of the Cross? When I was seventeen or eighteen I had no other food." The novice mistress confirms this confidence of the saint in a remarkable way: "One day—she may have been about seventeen—she spoke to me about certain passages in St John of the Cross' mystical writings with an understanding so far above her age that I was amazed by it." And one of her novices says that she could quote by heart whole passages from the *Spiritual Canticle* or the *Living Flame of Love*.[1]

Evidence of this kind should make us very wary as to the slight importance Sœur Thérèse is supposed to have attached to books on mystical theology. What seems to us to be beyond question is the fact that, inspired by some supernatural gift of intelligence, she thoroughly and with rare ease assimilated any book or doctrine which met the needs of her soul. She passed over second-rate commentators and mediocre writers, and was led by a divine instinct to the

[1] "She used to quote for me by heart long extracts from the *Spiritual Canticle* and the *Living Flame of Love*, and told me that in time of great trial, these books had comforted her and had done her untold good."

deepest and purest sources of spiritual doctrine and the life of prayer.

She had thoroughly mastered the *Imitation of Christ,* and knew it better than anyone. She had carried this little treatise on the mystical life about her everywhere since her childhood. To tease her, and to edify herself, her aunt would sometimes open the book at random and begin to read a chapter. Thérèse would finish it from memory. Little souls who have learnt the *Imitation* by heart like this may well do without books.

Sœur Thérèse had also read the works of her patron saint, St Teresa of Avila, pretty closely. But it is strange that she made these books less her own than those of St John of the Cross. Far from her autobiography being a plagiarism of the great St Teresa's life, as some partial-minded people have asserted, the two books are utterly unlike and of a very different inspiration. The little saint of Lisieux has not got St Teresa of Avila's methodical mind. Her genius did not incline her to insert in the story of her life itself four degrees of prayer; she would never have dreamt of classifying the progress and the graces of the mystical life into seven successive mansions. Rightly or wrongly, we have lost our appreciation for divisions and categories, and Sœur Thérèse belongs to our times; she is one of us. To her the irresistible attraction of St Teresa's books was the great mystic's strong and tender love for the humanity and the Passion of

Christ, and the descriptions of certain states of prayer she had experienced. Notwithstanding this fact, it must be acknowledged that Sœur Thérèse read St John of the Cross much more; he was and he remained her favourite writer.

Other books have been quoted as having inspired our little saint at different periods of her life—Surin's *Foundations of the Spiritual Life*,[1] and Mgr. de Ségur's *Piety and the Interior Life*. Nor should the Catechism be forgotten, which the saint had set herself to understand as perfectly as possible from her childhood up. She used to listen with eager attention to the explanations given by the chaplain, Canon Domin, who used to call her "his little doctor." She used, too, to ask her mistresses difficult questions. "In the classes on religious instruction," one of them records, "she was constantly asking questions deep enough to put me at a loss." During her Confirmation retreat she also made it her special study to understand the Church's teaching on the gifts of the Holy Ghost.

Pope Pius XI summed up Sœur Thérèse's whole spiritual formation with equal fitness and exactitude in the homily delivered on the day of her canonization, when he said: "She had drawn the pure doctrine of the faith from the

[1] Surin's *Foundations of the Spiritual Life* is simply a series of comments on the *Imitation:* it teaches the same detachment from creatures and from self: in both these respects it must have been peculiarly suited to Sœur Thérèse.

lessons of the Catechism, that of asceticism from the golden book of the *Imitation of Christ*, that of mysticism from the writings of her Father, St John of the Cross. And, above all, she nourished her mind and heart by assiduous meditation on the Holy Scriptures." To all other books, indeed, the saint preferred the Gospel, and in the latter years of her life she made it the indispensable and wellnigh exclusive food of her spiritual life.

"Later on, she wrote, all spiritual writers left me cold and dry, and I am still in the same dispositions. However beautiful or touching the book I open, my heart at once shrinks and I read without understanding; or if I understand, my mind stops still and I cannot meditate. In my helplessness the holy Scriptures and the *Imitation* are of the greatest assistance. In them I find a hidden manna, solid and pure. But it is in the Gospels that I find most help in time of prayer; from them I draw all the food I need for my poor soul. I am always finding out new lights in them and hidden mysterious meanings. . . . Our Lord has no need of books or teachers to instruct souls withal. . . ."

Continual reading, study, and meditation had given the saint a knowledge of the New Testament, the like of which is only met with in professors and preachers. "The Gospels were her delight," we are told; "quotations came quite naturally to support what she was saying; it made one think she knew them by heart." We could adduce many other testimonies in support of this statement. Moreover, the saint's auto-

biography shows how she had mastered the science of the Scriptures. We need not hesitate to dwell upon this point, for meditation on the Gospel is much neglected nowadays.

" In the last years of her life the Gospel alone filled her mind and was the food which satisfied her soul. All other spiritual books left her cold and dry. ' How sweet it is,' she would say, ' not to learn anything except from the mouth of our Lord.' "

This meditation on the Gospel was no vague dreaming, as one might be tempted to suppose, but was founded on the analysis of the real, even literal, meaning. Sœur Thérèse used to copy in her cell the passages which agreed in the Gospels or in the Bible; she was surprised and distressed if she came across divergent interpretations or translations. If she had been able she would have learnt Greek or Hebrew, in order, she said, to read the Scriptures in the original text.

The saint chiefly studied the New Testament, but she was acquainted with the Old Testament too, and, led by her inspired genius, had in particular assimilated the most telling pages of the sacred books. To us it appears most remarkable that St Teresa of the Child Jesus should have picked out from among all the inspired passages of the Bible one of the most extraordinary prophecies, which may be said to be the culminating point in the chain of prophecies which form the messianic books. In the midst of a people intent only upon wealth, territorial domination,

and temporal ambition and glory, how could a prophet like Isaias prophesy that the Messias promised to Israel would be the most despised man of his people? Such a conception of greatness sublime in its abjection is the view of unequalled genius, as well as a pre-eminently supernatural revelation.

"*The servant of God shall understand, he shall be exalted and extolled, and shall be exceedingly high . . . there is no beauty in him nor comeliness; and we have seen him, and there was no sightliness, that we should desire him. Despised and the most abject of men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief: his look was, as it were, hidden and despised. Whereupon we esteemed him not.*"

Yet to this conception of a suffering, scorned Messias the prophet linked that of a redeeming Messias. The just man would by his voluntarily accepted sufferings redeem the sins and crimes of his people.

"*We have thought him, as it were, a leper, and as one struck by God and afflicted. But he was wounded for our iniquities; he was bruised for our sins. The chastisement of our peace was upon him, and by his bruises we are healed. . . . He was offered because it was his own will, and he opened not his mouth. He shall be led as a sheep to the slaughter, and shall be dumb as a lamb before his shearer, and he shall not open his mouth.*"

St Teresa of the Child Jesus seized upon and based her whole spiritual life upon these two root ideas of the wonderful fifty-third chapter

of Isaias—that supernatural greatness must be sought in abjection, and that moral and physical suffering voluntarily accepted has a redemptive value. We ought to give our whole attention to the saint's own words:

"Those words of Isaias: *Who hath believed our report . . . there is no beauty in him, no comeliness . . .* are the basis of my devotion to the Holy Face, or rather, the basis of my whole spirituality."

She tells us that she added chapter lx of Isaias to chapter liii, of which we have given a summary. In it occur the words which must so often have inspired and supported the saint in her life as a voluntary victim. *Because thou wast forsaken and hated, and there was none that passed through thee, I will make thee to be an everlasting generation, a joy unto generation and generation.* Sœur Thérèse, who while yet a child had intuitively felt she was predestined to some mysterious glory, understood better every day that true greatness must be drawn from oblivion. Thenceforth she devised every means of hiding her acts of virtue from her sisters' eyes, and rejoiced whenever she chanced to be set aside or was treated with contempt. She cast a veil over her acts of self-denial, remembering that the face of the Son of God had been forgotten and reviled.

This devotion to the Holy Face is of the highest importance. The piety of St Teresa of the Child Jesus is seen thereby to be traditional;

it plunges its deepest and most distant roots across the Gospels down in the most vital prophecies of the Old Testament. And this is one of the most certain proofs that this spirituality, this Way of Childhood, extends to all times, to all places, and is eminently Catholic. Unfortunately it is to be feared that many shallow souls will retain of Sœur Thérèse's spirituality only her devotion to the Holy Childhood, forgetful or heedless of the devotion she had for the Passion, the bruised face of the Messias. Yet here is a statement by the saint's own sister, Mère Agnès de Jésus, which should afford us food for thought:

"The Servant of God felt especially drawn to devotion to the Holy Face. Her devotion to the Child Jesus, tender as it was, is not to be compared with the devotion she felt for the Holy Face. It was at Carmel, at the time of our great trials in connection with our father's mental disease, that she became more addicted to the mystery of the Passion, and it is then that she was allowed to add the name of the Holy Face to her own. . . . The share she gives to her favourite devotion may be seen in her chief poems. She painted the Holy Face on chasubles, on pictures. She composed an act of consecration to the Holy Face for her novices, and a prayer for herself, etc. . . ."

As we have just been told, it was wittingly and of her own accord, more than a year after entering Carmel, that Sœur Thérèse asked leave to add the title of the Holy Face to her own name. At the cost of bitter mental suffering, she dis-

covered the mysterious, precious doctrine which is hidden in the reviled Face of Jesus. At that time, indeed, Thérèse's father, Monsieur Martin, who was a victim to creeping paralysis, had to be taken to a nursing-home for treatment. It is then that she determined to consecrate herself wholly to the Holy Face, and she asked the Prioress if she might bear this title, as if she wished thenceforth to become the sister of Veronica, the bride of our Lord with his mocked and bleeding Face.[1]

"The Holy Face, we are further told, was the mirror in which Sœur Thérèse beheld her beloved's soul and heart. It was the meditation-book whence she drew the science of love.

"She always had it before her in her breviary and in her stall during prayer. It was hung on her bed-curtains during her illness; the sight of it helped her to endure her long martyrdom.

"It was in meditating upon the Holy Face that she studied humility."

In the face of evidence so explicit, we cannot doubt but that the devotion to the Holy Face, as much as and more than devotion to the Holy Childhood of our Lord, was an essential part of Sœur Thérèse's spirituality. This devotion only

[1] The reader will see for himself how unfounded is the supposition that the title of the Holy Face was added to that of the Child Jesus by those who "pushed" Sœur Thérèse. One man writes: "The title of the Holy Face, which, as you may see, looks extremely well, they added." Such suggestions are indeed uttered too lightly and unfairly.

yielded to the yet more important devotion to the Eucharist. A disciple of St John of the Cross and of St Teresa, Sœur Thérèse de l'Enfant-Jésus did not conceive the Christian life otherwise than as a continual spiritual communion. To make her whole day, her whole life, a communion with the life of our Lord was truly the centre of all Sœur Thérèse's spirituality.

4. Her life of communion with our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament.

All Sœur Thérèse's admirers know the devotion, rare in those days (1888), she had vowed from her entrance into Carmel to the Holy Eucharist and to Holy Communion. As a child she had imposed on herself as a rule of conduct never to ask her confessor to increase the appointed number of Communions. But at Carmel she completely changed her mind on this subject.

"I should set about it in a very different way now," she wrote, "for I am convinced that one should tell one's director if one feels a longing to receive our Lord. It is not to remain in a golden ciborium that he comes down from heaven every day, but to find another heaven: the heaven of our soul where he delights to dwell."

The more she gained experience of souls, the more openly she declared herself to be in favour of frequent and daily Communion.[1] Most religious of advanced age do not as a rule favour even the most legitimate innovations. Mère

[1] "At Carmel, we read in the canonization process, she appealed in her ardent prayers and longings for some word from the Pope to set souls free from all the rules and customs of communities which prevented daily Communion."

Marie de Gonzague, who was masterful and deeply imbued with the old order of things, which she held to be her own, sought to hinder daily Communion from being introduced into her community. Sœur Thérèse was very sorry for this. She told her Prioress : " Mother, when I am dead I will make you change your mind." The prediction was realized.

She gave an example of the most heroic fidelity to the Holy Eucharist; even when she felt most exhausted she still would approach the Communion rails. One morning, after having been severely blistered, she had heard Mass as usual and had received Holy Communion. After her thanksgiving her sister, Mère Agnès de Jésus, went up to see her.

" I found her," she writes, " utterly spent, sitting on her little bench, with her back to the partition which divides her cell from our Lady's oratory. She answered my remarks with : ' I do not count this too much suffering to win one Communion.' "

Her fidelity to frequent Communion is all the more remarkable in that the saint was tried by coldness and dryness during her thanksgiving. Here again she is the model of many little souls who receive Holy Communion out of duty, obedience, and faith, without ever experiencing any consolations. She longed for the Holy Eucharist as the strengthening food of the soul, a spiritual sustenance necessary to the practice of one's daily duty. It was pure faith, and not

sentimental piety, which drew her with invincible energy to our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament.

" What can I tell you, Mother, about my thanksgivings after Communion at that and at all times? There is no time when I taste less consolation. Is not this to be expected, since I do not desire to receive our Lord for my own satisfaction, but simply to give him pleasure? . . . I picture my soul as a piece of waste ground, and beg our Lady to clear away my imperfections—which are like heaps of rubbish. . . . But all this does not prevent distractions and drowsiness from troubling me, and not infrequently I resolve to continue my thanksgiving throughout the day, since I made it so badly in choir."

The resolution " to continue her thanksgiving throughout the day " is most characteristic of Sœur Thérèse's spiritual life. Our saint's whole ambition was to make the entire day a thanksgiving, a Communion. The great longing she felt continually to be united to our Lord, and in him to the Blessed Trinity, made her write down the following petition in her act of oblation two years before her death : that Jesus should abide in her as in the tabernacle. It was one of the saint's most daring prayers, and one of the few instances in which she earnestly implored an extraordinary grace, and one unknown in the annals of hagiography.

" In my heart I feel boundless desires, and I confidently beseech thee to take possession of my soul. I cannot receive thee in Holy Communion as often as I should wish; but, Lord, art thou not all-powerful? Abide in

me as in the tabernacle, never depart from thy little victim."[1]

This petition, written in the *Act of Oblation as a Victim of Divine Love,* Sœur Thérèse wore day and night close to her heart. If we reflect that our Lord has favoured other saints with outstanding graces—transverberations, change of hearts, stigmata—might we not admit that the little saint in some sort attained the object of her earnest prayer? Sœur Thérèse, of whom we are told "that she never doubted anything when she remembered the omnipotence of love," certainly thought that her prayer was heard and accordingly wrote:

"Thou dwellest a prisoner in me night and day."

The heart of Sœur Thérèse de l'Enfant-Jésus was a kind of living tabernacle. And her spiritual life should be regarded under the aspect of a continual communion with the soul and the divinity of Jesus Christ. In Sœur Thérèse are literally verified our Lord's sublime words in St John's Gospel: *If anyone love me he will keep my word. And my Father will love him: and we will come to him and make our abode with him.* During the last two years of her life Sœur Thérèse had attained to such heights of

[1] "I am certain," says Mère Agnès de Jésus, "that in this prayer she was thinking of a miraculous permanence of the sacred species, and not merely of the permanence of the divine influence, which is produced without any miracle in the souls of the faithful. Besides, in her Act of Oblation, she appeals on this point to the omnipotence of Jesus Christ."

perfection that she fully realized the indwelling of our Lord, with the Father and the Holy Ghost.

When we regard her interior life as a real and continual communion with Jesus Christ, with the Father, and with the Blessed Trinity—for it was on the Feast of the Blessed Trinity that she offered herself as a victim of love—we are better able to understand how it was that Sœur Thérèse could say that she never let three minutes pass without thinking of God. And if anyone should ask how it is possible to have so continual a sense of the presence of God, we answer with the saint: "It is not so difficult after all, for one naturally thinks of one whom one loves." We shall not be surprised to find her lovingly united to God the Father, for is she not a living tabernacle? A sister once entered her cell and found her sewing very skilfully, yet evidently in a state of prayer. "What are you doing?" she asked her. Sœur Thérèse replied: "I am meditating on the *Pater Noster;* it is so sweet to think of and to call God our Father." If we take the point of view of a mysterious and continual communion with our Lord, the following words of our saint are full of luminous and enlightening meaning:

"I have understood and I know by experience that the kingdom of heaven is within us. Our Lord needs neither books nor doctors to instruct souls; he is the Doctor of doctors, and teaches without sound of words. I have never heard him speak, but I know he is within me. Every moment he guides and inspires me; at the very moment I need them, I perceive lights hitherto unknown

to me. It is not as a rule during the time of prayer that they burst upon my sight, but amid my daily occupations."

5. Sœur Thérèse's Prayer and the tradition of the Church.

St Teresa of the Child Jesus' prayer cannot be better understood than under the aspect of a continual communion. It follows that this implies a life of prayer rather than a method of meditation. Father Faber, in a well-known chapter of his book, *Growth in Holiness,* divides the methods of prayer into two categories—that of St Ignatius as explained at the beginning of the chapter, and that of the Sulpicians. "The Sulpician method," he writes, "is faithfully modelled on the tradition of the early Fathers and the saints of the desert. . . . Monsieur Olier generally substitutes the word prayer for that of meditation; and, filled with the spirit of the old tradition, he, as well as his interpreters, constantly has recourse to St Ambrose, St John Climacus, St Nilus, Cassian, and other writers of the same school, whose rules he borrows. This conformity with the early Fathers is the distinguishing characteristic of the Sulpician method; it is a monument of the Church's oldest spirituality." If we study the Sulpician method of prayer in its origins, in the Cardinal de Bérulle, the Père du Condren, and Monsieur Olier, before their successors began to complicate it by unending dissection,[1] we shall be surprised to see what

[1] Monsieur Olier, and the fact is worthy of note, in his *Catéchisme chrétien pour la vie intérieure,* regards prayer as

striking and substantial analogies it presents with the life of prayer St Teresa of the Child Jesus spontaneously adopted. Here again the saint renewed Catholic spirituality by simply returning to its origin and source.

The primary and most general characteristic of this traditional or Sulpician method is to regard prayer as a spiritual communion, the whole end of which is to make us ever more and more united to our Lord in all our actions. This prayer essentially consists of three distinct but inseparable acts: first, adoration, whereby one humbles oneself at our Lord's feet while recalling his divinity and his infinite perfections; second, communion properly so called, whereby one unites oneself to our Lord and begs him to make his thoughts, his intentions, his holiness take the

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a kind of spiritual communion. In Lesson vi, he treats of "the manner of making a spiritual communion and of uniting oneself to the spirit of our Lord in all our works." In Lesson vii, he treats of "the application of the aforesaid doctrine to prayer." In his spiritual life Monsieur Olier had been influenced by Père du Condren and the Cardinal de Bérulle. The latter, whose relations with Carmel are well known, mistrusted methods of prayer which made too much use of the imagination and reason. He wrote: "We are too prone to act in our prayer by discourse and imagination." Père du Condren had offered himself as a victim to the love of our Lord, he wrote: "We ought to live with God as children with their father . . . and tenderly to honour him, because he looks upon us as his beloved children." He would have us conduct ourselves in prayer "as a child full of love for its father, as a religious victim." There is evident agreement between this doctrine and Sœur Thérèse's way of spiritual childhood.

place of our own thoughts, our desires, and our great frailty; third, co-operation, whereby we ask our Lord to give us his zeal, his gentleness, his strength, in order that we may share effectually in his apostolate. Prayer thus conceived is, it is evident, simply a spiritual communion, wherein we humbly cast ourselves at our Lord's feet, begging him to transform us into himself, in order that we may continue his work of salvation.

This manner of understanding prayer is inspired by the most famous chapters of St John and St Paul. *Abide in me and I in you,* said our Lord; *he that abideth in me, the same beareth much fruit, for without me you can do nothing.* And St Paul, who so fully realized this union with our Lord, wrote: *And I live, now not I, but Christ liveth in me.* The prayer of tradition was simply a spiritual communion and had no immediate end other than to make us live with the life of Christ. The Fathers of the Church tell us to keep Christ before our eyes in adoration, in our hearts in communion, and in our hands in co-operation. St Ambrose, in yet more striking terms, urges us ever to bear Christ as a seal on our foreheads that we may in all humility confess his Godhead, as a seal on our hearts that we may love none but him, as a seal on our arms that we may with all our strength co-operate in the coming of his kingdom.

We have already said—and it will bear repeating, for nothing is more important—Sœur

Thérèse's whole spiritual method was a communion with our Lord's thoughts, his love, his action, always and everywhere. She humbled herself before our Lord by reflecting that she could do nothing of herself; she trusted herself to him in love, remembering his omnipotence, and, ever remaining thus united to him, she co-operated in his work—the sanctification of souls. Here is an incident in Sœur Thérèse's life which gives us a lively idea of the way she understood a life of prayer in union with our Lord. At the age of twenty she was officially entrusted with the spiritual direction of the novices, under very delicate circumstances.

"The moment I entered that sanctuary of souls," she writes, "I saw at a glance that the task was beyond my strength. Throwing myself forthwith into our Lord's arms, I said: 'Dear Lord, thou seest that I am too small to feed these little ones, but if through me thou wilt give to each what is suitable, then fill my hands, and without leaving the shelter of thy arms, or even turning my head, I will distribute thy treasures to the souls who come to me for food. . . .' The knowledge that I could do nothing of myself made my task seem easier. My sole interior occupation was to unite myself more and more closely to God, knowing that all the rest would be added unto me. . . . I confess, Mother, that if I had acted otherwise, and relied on my own strength, I should very soon have laid down my arms."

The reader is asked to notice and, if possible, to remember what, broadly speaking, may be called the method of St Teresa of the Child Jesus: "My sole interior occupation was to unite

myself more and more closely to God, knowing that all the rest would be added unto me." This union she sought in humility, in distrust of her own strength, in loving trust in our Lord. She never lost her hold on Jesus Christ, in his Childhood as in his Passion. This was her whole method.

One of the most pernicious errors into which some people fall, and in which they persist, is to believe that one can, with the help of some learned method, make a half-hour's prayer or meditation when one has spent the entire day in occupations of all kinds without a thought of our Lord, and without remaining united to him. And, as a matter of fact, we see that people who become thus extroverted become unable to make their meditation, and end by giving it up altogether. It may be asserted, though it appears paradoxical, that one should virtually pray all day, or one will never pray at all. It is one of the signs of St Ignatius' genius that he earnestly urges us to think of our prayer long before and long after; that is to say, throughout the day. One must lead a meditative life, a life of prayer, if one would meditate and pray aright.

Then let us make it our whole business to unite ourselves interiorly to God through our blessed Lord, knowing that all the rest will be added unto us. And let us not forget that we shall be more and more closely united to Christ as the Way of Spiritual Childhood tells us, first

by small acts of self-denial, and then by oft-repeated acts of love. Sœur Thérèse prepared for her first Communion by making 818 acts of self-denial and 2,773 loving aspirations. Let us do likewise. As faithful disciples of the little way, the Way of Spiritual Childhood, let us mortify ourselves and keep ourselves in continual union with the God of the tabernacle by acts of love. Then, at the time of prayer, we shall only need to humble ourselves before our Lord in order to be more closely united to him, without recourse to any complicated methods. We may, of course, find it helpful to use some spiritual book—St John of the Cross, the *Imitation*, the Gospel. But we repeat, for it is the last and the first word of this method as old as it is new, let us make sure that our prayer is a communion with the virtues, the love, the apostolic and disinterested zeal of our blessed Lord.

CHAPTER III

THE THIRD NEGATIVE CHARACTERISTIC OF SŒUR THÉRÈSE'S SPIRITUALITY: THE ABSENCE OF FREQUENT EXTRAORDINARY FAVOURS

1. The difference between St Teresa of Lisieux and the saints of olden times.

In the biographies of saints of olden times, extraordinary phenomena—ecstasies, visions, prophecies, stigmata, miracles—hold a predominant place. The lives of St Francis of Assisi, St Dominic, St Thomas Aquinas, St Teresa of Avila are full of graces of this kind. Blessed Raymund of Capua's biography of St Catherine of Siena is, it would seem, the most extraordinary of any. St Catherine in her earliest years was seized by an ecstasy in the middle of the street; she remained as motionless as a marble statue. Another time she was carried, all unknowing, from the cave whither she had fled to her father's house. Our Lord appeared to her daily, talked with her, and recited the divine Office with her. Catherine's face was transfigured into that of Christ. Her heart, her hands, her feet were pierced by the hallowed stigmata. For weeks together she had no other nourishment but her daily Communion. Her ecstasies lasted so long that the sacristans, weary of waiting, carried her by the feet and hands out of the church into the street, without her being aware of it. It was in

a continuous rapture that she dictated, in a few weeks, the *Dialogue*. She could discern souls in mortal sin by some fœtid odour they emitted. In her lifetime she wrought miraculous cures. In fine, St Catherine of Siena's biography is the type of extraordinary saints' lives.

From this point of view nothing could be more different than the life of St Teresa of the Child Jesus. She never worked a miracle in the whole of her existence. Her autobiography does not tell us of any rapture properly so called. In the inquiry into her life of prayer made in the preceding chapter we have not encountered, from her entry into the convent, any vision, any ecstasy, or even any ligature of the faculties of the soul. Contemplation does not seem ever to have paralyzed her limbs or suspended the use of her senses; her body was never raised above the ground, as so often happened in the case of St Teresa; she never saw our Lord or the saints appearing to her. Such an absence of extraordinary phenomena in the life of a saint so quickly beatified and canonized is quite a novel and a very remarkable negative characteristic. "Never, as far as I know," her sister bore witness, "did she have any ecstasies."

Be it noted that Sœur Thérèse in no way desired these extraordinary favours of the mystical life, nor had she an exaggerated idea of their value, as so many nuns and even enlightened Catholics have. When she was sixteen

years old, during her clothing retreat, she wrote as follows to Mère Agnès de Jésus on the subject of the trials inherent in community life: "Indeed, I long for those heart-wounds, those pin-pricks which inflict so much pain; I would rather have sacrifice than any ecstasy in the world." Among the dates which commemorate the principal graces she received—thirteen in number—that of February 12, 1889, is entitled: Our great wealth. This date records the most bitter mental suffering Sœur Thérèse endured—her father's, her "beloved king's," admittance into an asylum. In her autobiography the saint, in a few lines, summed up the deep conviction which through those trying months daily grew stronger.

"In heaven, we shall gladly dwell on those dark days of exile. Indeed, the three years of my father's martyrdom seem to me the most fruitful and the sweetest of our lives, nor would I exchange them for the most sublime ecstasies. . . ."

It was one of the essential characteristics of Sœur Thérèse's spirituality, of her Way of Childhood, to prefer great and little sacrifices lovingly accepted to the most sublime ecstasies. "The number of little ones on earth is very great," she wrote. And with this host of little ones, of souls not called to follow extraordinary ways, she wanted to share her wealth. If she did not desire extraordinary graces, if she loved her own simple life, one of faith only, it was "chiefly that little souls might have no cause to

envy her." In the last week of her illness she foretold that the publication of her autobiography "would be helpful to souls of all sorts, except to those who are in extraordinary ways." And when one of her sisters was telling her how much she regretted that she had not written more, she answered: "There is quite enough of it; there is something for everyone, except for those in extraordinary ways."

This kind of spontaneous mistrust of anything extraordinary, or, to turn it another way, her esteem for virtue, which, so far as its object is concerned, does not depart from the normal path, is essentially significant of Sœur Thérèse's spiritual mentality. The bent of her mind was wholly opposed to that of the writers of apocryphal and marvellous legends.

"What does me good," she used to say, "when I think about the Holy Family is to picture their life as being quite ordinary, instead of all the marvels we hear or invent. . . . When I was looking at our Lady's statue this evening I realized that it was not true, whatever they may say, that she had not known physical suffering. She suffered a great deal on her journeys from heat, from cold, from weariness. She often went hungry. . . . She is depicted to us in sermons as being unapproachable, and when one has to keep on saying O, O, one ends by having enough of it. Let priests tell us of virtues we too can practise. . . . And good St Joseph, how fond I am of him! I picture him with his plane, getting very tired. . . . From time to time he wipes away the perspiration which runs down his face, but he does it when no one is looking, so as not to grieve our

Lady, his feelings were so delicate. . . . He was not always fairly paid for his work; perhaps he was even blamed. . . ."

Because she felt no attraction for unlikely and legendary stories, Sœur Thérèse would have made a good historian; she was exact and sure.[1] She had a love of truth; she was gifted with good sense and with common sense in a very high degree. And it was with that good sense of hers that she renewed modern spirituality. If we could only realize to what an extent the search after and the love of the extraordinary is a root of error! "There is nothing so common as good things," wrote Pascal; "it is simply a matter of discerning them, and it is a fact that they are all quite natural and within our reach, and even known to everyone. But we do not know how to distinguish them. This is universally true. Excellence, of whatever kind it may be, is not found in extraordinary or queer things. One rises in order to attain unto them, and one departs further from the mark; as a rule one must stoop low." Because she stooped so low and made herself little like a child, Sœur

[1] She used to say: "What does me good is not the tales they make up and tell us—for instance, that the Child Jesus made birds of clay, breathed on them, and put life into them. Our little Lord did not work useless miracles like that! Else why were they not transported into Egypt by a miracle which would have been so useful and so easy to God? They would have got there in the twinkling of an eye! No, everything happened in their life as it does in ours." We can see that the little saint had a sense of reality.

Thérèse was able perfectly to distinguish what it is that essentially constitutes virtue. She did not commit the capital mistake of thinking, more or less consciously, that sanctity consists in extraordinary or fantastic mortifications or in ecstasies and prodigies.

One day during her last illness they said to her: "Perhaps at the moment of your death we shall have a heavenly vision to comfort us."—"No," she at once answered, "I have never wished for extraordinary graces; it is not my little way." She added "that there could not have been anything that was not quite ordinary in her whole life, and that they would find nothing but her bones, in order that little souls might have nothing to envy her." She repeated: "Don't be surprised if I do not appear to you after my death, and if you see nothing extraordinary as a sign of my happiness. You will remember that it is my little way."

Throughout her religious life Sœur Thérèse set herself perfectly to practise the Carmelite rule in the least of its details, but without ever committing any of those extravagances which are likely to attract attention. On the contrary, she endeavoured not to single herself out in any way from the common by any special acts. "The Servant of God," we are told, "avoided anything which might have been extraordinary; she took pains to escape notice and to remain in the greatest simplicity. . . . She was never ostenta-

tious in her practice of virtue." Her simplicity threw people off the scent, and as a consequence the nuns who rubbed up against her never suspected her holiness until they looked very closely.

"I saw," attests one of her novices, "that she constantly and in every detail of her conduct towards her neighbours practised her divine instructions in charity, but with such simplicity that no one would ever have suspected the sacrifices she imposed upon her quick and eager temperament in order to overcome her dislikes. She was thought to be "swimming" in delights when she was most tried. Her habitual tranquillity gained her some rather harsh judgements. People did not fear to say out loud that the Servant of God had no great merit in practising virtue, because she had never had a struggle. . . . 'I can assure you,' said the saint to a novice for her encouragement, 'that I have had many a struggle and that I have not passed a day without suffering, not one! We poor mortals, when we can't see, we can't believe!'"

If among the nuns who lived with Sœur Thérèse there happened to be more than one who did not believe in the sanctity of her conduct because they saw nothing extraordinary in it, it is all the more reason why we should not be astonished that many minds, even of the enlightened, should have been misled by the apparent naïveté of some passages in her autobiography. "It is a rose-water life," some readers have exclaimed. "The first reading," a religious of note confessed with laudable sincerity, "impressed me somewhat unfavourably; it all seemed rather childish. . . . I was sorry that superiors

had encouraged the writing of this autobiography, for I thought it imprudent. Five or six years later I was forced to admit that the reading of the book had a very wholesome effect on souls under my direction. I took up the book again and have studied it deeply since. I came to the conclusion that, if thoughtfully considered, the work offers very deep teaching on the love of God."

A number of Sœur Thérèse's warm admirers might make the same confession. The saint has thrown such a veil of simplicity and smiling good grace over her virtues, her merits, and her trials that one has to go over the ground several times in order to fathom fully the deep doctrine and the dearly bought experience it conceals. It may be asserted that without very special training and study no one would discern the full value of the autobiography at a first reading. It is then quite lawful to be mistaken; but to contemn Sœur Thérèse's kind of sanctity, now that she is canonized, would be to run counter to the Church's decisions, and to risk incurring the judgement passed in the canonization process on a nun "who thought Sœur Thérèse's piety was childish and shallow, but who was steeped in rationalism and worldliness, and was well known in the community as lacking in supernatural sense." How many people one has met who think but little of the saint simply because they were too busy, too confident in mere human

activities, and lacking in spiritual and mystical sense.

Sœur Thérèse's sanctity is not sensational; it does not obtrude itself upon the senses by any startling acts. It reveals itself to the eyes of the mind, and those who consider it carefully are amazed at it. There is a remark of her elder sister's which is most suggestive and well calculated to make us thoughtful: "When I saw her virtue, so great, so extraordinary in its simplicity, I thought with regret: 'To think that no one will ever know her!'" To catch such an utterance is a great help towards a definition of Sœur Thérèse's kind of holiness; if there is anything extraordinary in her virtue, it is wholly interior, and must be looked for at close range. The Carmelite nun who seems, after her sisters, to have most intimately known and appreciated the saint tells us: "Sœur Thérèse went unnoticed on account of her great simplicity and her humility. But when the nuns' attention was drawn to the conduct of the Servant of God, all, or nearly all, acknowledged the perfection of her virtues."

We must have some particular virtue or incident in Sœur Thérèse's life pointed out to us before we are willing to acknowledge its surpassing merit. And by some strange and unexpected reversal of our impressions, when we have gained a more intimate knowledge of the depth and finish of the saint's perfection, it may even

dismay us. The mere fact of her holiness having been proved to be so great may make it seem less lovable. One of her novices carefully scrutinized her virtues, and this is the impression it made on her :

" I watched her everywhere, but I never managed to find her in fault. . . . I did not feel drawn to her by any feeling of affection. I even avoided her. Not that this was from any want of appreciation ; on the contrary, I thought her too perfect. It would have encouraged me if she had been less so."

How thankless and fickle is our human nature, stained as it is with original sin ! When sanctity appears wearing a pleasant and attractive garb, we scorn it ; when further reflection shows it to be consummate in the least detail and wholly transcendent, we shrink from it. St Teresa of the Child Jesus performed all the ordinary actions which form the woof of our life perfectly and with the utmost love of God. But this simple truth is hard to bear and we are loath to be convinced of it, for whatever we may think, we are not very spiritual and are too ready to trust first to our senses, and to value anything that strikes them as being in any way miraculous.

One of the greatest lessons of Sœur Thérèse's life and canonization is that it has illustrated this capital truth—*that sanctity essentially consists in union with God and in the love with which we perform ordinary actions.*

Divine providence, foreseeing this new kind of canonization, willed that the saint should be brought up, watched over, and surrounded, in the world and in the cloister, until her death, by her three sisters. Enlightened and strengthened as they were by sisterly affection and by their virtue, her sisters have proved the most competent and clear-sighted witnesses ever heard or quoted in any canonization process. Formed in the same school as Sœur Thérèse, they were careful to protest with the utmost precision and a corresponding energy against the inevitable tendency which inclines men to seek out and to exaggerate the extraordinary element in sanctity. But if Sœur Thérèse had been canonized half a century later, and if her own sisters had no longer been there, its character of simplicity would have been disfigured by the unconscious work of legend. But her three sisters were there, and they bore witness that simplicity was the rule.

" Sœur Thérèse," attests Mère Agnès de Jésus, " as to supernatural gifts, or at least as to their manifestation, does not resemble the greater number of saints canonized by the Church. Except her vision of our Lady, which revealed to her beforehand my father's illness, except also the flame of love with which she says she was once wounded, and the ecstasy of her death, I see nothing in her life which rises above the ordinary. Perhaps one ought also to except certain predictions she made regarding what was to happen after her death. . . . It must therefore be said that any extraordinary mystical phenomena in her life were altogether by way of exception : simplicity was the rule. To think otherwise would

be to alter the very encouraging aspect our Lord was pleased to give his little handmaid on purpose to call to his divine love 'the little souls' who would be willing to follow her."

"It is my duty to say," declares Sœur Geneviève de la Sainte-Face, with remarkable vigour, "that numbers 239, 240, 241, 242, 244 of the articles (of the bishop's process) seem to me to bear signs of exaggeration, and present as frequent and habitual, phenomena which were extremely rare in her life. I myself would prefer her not to be beatified rather than not to give her portrait exactly as I believe it in conscience to be. Besides, any frequent extraordinary supernatural gifts in her life would have been contrary to God's designs for her soul. Her life was intended to be simple in order that it might be a pattern for little souls."

"Number 216 of the articles," asserts Sœur Geneviève again, "is in my opinion exaggerated: never did any heavenly perfumes emanate from her. What we did see was quite as beautiful, but much simpler, and it is just this blending of the supernatural with the natural which gives Sœur Thérèse her peculiar and exquisite charm."

"Any extraordinary mystical phenomena in Sœur Thérèse's life were wholly by way of exception; simplicity was the rule." We ought to abide by this statement as by a kind of dogma. The spirituality of St Teresa of the Child Jesus is negative as far as extraordinary phenomena are concerned. Does this mean that they are altogether banned? Certainly not. It was necessary that her life should offer some such phenomena, in order that Sœur Thérèse might not pass utterly unnoticed, and that by means of this outward bait men's attention might be drawn

to consider her deeper virtues. We are now about briefly to inquire into the exceptional favours granted to the saint, without either exaggerating or minimizing any detail.

2. The prophetic vision of her father's affliction.

The first really extraordinary phenomenon we come across in Sœur Thérèse's mystical life is a prophetic vision concerning her father. The narrative in the autobiography, which is confirmed by the evidence of the chief witnesses, tells us that the scene took place in summer. "It was about two or three o'clock in the afternoon." The sun was shining brightly, and the garden of the little country house called Les Buissonets was all decked with green; "all the world was gay." Monsieur Martin was away for a few days; he had gone to Alençon to settle some business. The two elder sisters, Marie and Pauline, were at work in one of the two attics, the windows of which overlooked the garden behind the house. Little Thérèse was observing nature through the window of the adjoining room. By a kind of contrast not unknown in history, as if the superabundant joy of the natural world were fated to conjure up before guilty and uneasy mankind the thought of inevitable evils, it was on a fine summer's day in this lovely setting, when "all the world was gay," that the child Thérèse had the dark vision of the heavy moral trial which ten years later was to afflict her and her whole family. Here is the saint's narrative; its details, we repeat, have

been confirmed by the evidence given during the process :

" I was alone at a window looking out on to the big garden, my mind full of cheerful thoughts, when I saw before me, in front of the washhouse, a man dressed exactly like papa, of the same height and appearance, but more bent and aged. I say *aged* to describe his general appearance, for I did not see his face as the head was covered with a thick veil. He advanced slowly, with measured step, along my little garden. At that instant a feeling of supernatural fear came over me, and I called out aloud in a trembling voice : ' Papa, papa ! ' But the mysterious person seemed not to hear me. He continued his walk without even turning, and went towards a clump of firs, which divided the main garden walk into two. I expected to see him reappear on the other side of the big trees, but the prophetic vision had vanished."

Thérèse's cries of "Papa ! Papa !" all quivering with emotion as they were, made her two sisters, who were busy in the next room, come running in. They questioned the maid, who, of course, said she had not seen anything; to salve their consciences they went round the garden and searched the bushes, though they were quite certain they would not find anything. Yet Thérèse repeatedly said : " I saw a man, and the man was just like Papa." Their search was all in vain, and the elder sisters very wisely advised the little girl not to think about it any more.

" Not to think any more about it ! That was not in my power. Often and often my imagination brought before me this mysterious vision, often and often I

tried to raise the veil which hid its real meaning, and deep down in my heart I had a conviction that some day it would be fully revealed to me."

We have no hesitation in asserting that this prophetic vision is, from the view-point of rational criticism, the most inexplicable and exceptional of the mystic phenomena Sœur Thérèse's autobiography presents. The miraculous cure and our Lady's smile, into which we are shortly to inquire, are not so rare. Many blessed and saints, both men and women—as, for instance, Blessed Reginald—have seen our Lady appearing to them and have been miraculously cured. But this vision to a child of seven of her father's affliction, ten years before the event, is unique in all hagiography. It was not in the least Sœur Thérèse's way to attempt dramatic effects; on the contrary, she has rather simplified the incident in her narrative. But when we picture the setting of Les Buissonets, that open-air stage all bathed in sunlight, and imagine the phantom of her father, tall, bent, and aged, walking with slow and even steps, deaf to the call of his favourite child, as though he dwelt in some other world; when, too, we notice that strange yet characteristic detail that his head was covered with a thick veil so that the face was completely hidden from sight, we shall realize that we have here a scene of poignant interest, worthy of the Bible or of the great tragic poets. Eight years after, in 1888, Thérèse's father left

Lisieux for Alençon, just as at the time of the vision. Thinking himself too happy, and overloaded with consolations, he offered himself as a victim in the church of Notre-Dame. "My God!" he cried, "it is too much; yes, I am too happy. I shall not get to heaven like this; I want to suffer something for thee. I offer myself as victim. . . ."

God accepted the venerable father's offering, and not long after he was struck down by paralytic strokes which impaired and eventually deprived him of the use of his mental faculties. What a trial for a father and his family is the loss of his reason! The light, the sun of the thought world, is extinguished, and all mental activity sunk in darkness. When the use of reason goes there remains to all appearance little or nothing of the qualities which go to make up the definition of man. The bent old man whom Thérèse had seen in that unaccountable vision was her father, stricken with paralysis of the brain, and advancing with slow, even step towards his grave. "It is worthy of note," so one of his daughters tells us, "that he was often seen to cover his head in the early stages of his illness." The realization exactly corresponds, even in details one might regard as of secondary importance, to the prophecy.

But a question arises which Sœur Thérèse in her autobiography is careful not to evade. "Why," she writes, "did God give this light

to a child who would have died of grief if she had understood it? Why? . . . It is one of those unfathomable mysteries we shall only understand in heaven, where they will be the subject of our endless admiration." The saint, however, does suggest an explanation: God suited the trial to her weakness and willed that she should be prepared for it by a prophetic vision. The solution is true and reasonable, but to a great extent the "unfathomable mystery" is left standing, as the saint herself admits. The autobiography and the evidence of Thérèse's sisters suggest a further interpretation.

The prophetic vision of the father, who was so kindly and good, so generous and blameless, is that of the just man who offers himself and is accepted as a victim for the sins of his fellows, who are sinners. Now by an inevitable association of ideas this vision recalls that of Isaias, the Servant of Jehovah, which Thérèse was to make the foundation of her spirituality. The man whom Isaias saw in that strangest of all prophecies was a victim offered as a holocaust burdened with the weight of his sins. *He was offered because it was his own will . . . and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all.* When questioned he made no reply, *non aperuit os suum;* his face was veiled and hidden, *absconditus vultus.* The man whom Thérèse saw was likewise a willing victim; he does not answer when called, his face is hidden. The prophetic

vision of her father and that of the afflicted just man in Isaias correspond to each other. These affinities and characteristic features, which had sunk so deep into Sœur Thérèse's mind "that the remembrance of them was as vivid as the vision itself," were providentially to help her to fathom the true character of the Messias and the ineffable mysteries hidden in the Holy Face of the Saviour of men. "As the adorable Face of Jesus," writes the saint, "was hidden during his Passion, so it was fitting that the face of his humble servant should be veiled during the days of his humiliation, in order that it might shine with greater brilliancy in heaven." We should, too, record the precious information one of the saint's sisters gives on this point:

"It was at Carmel at the time we were so sorely tried on account of our father's mental affliction that she began to feel more drawn to the mystery of the Passion, and it was then that she was allowed to add the name of the Holy Face to her own. And after her death, I think it was this which inspired Sœur Geneviève's masterpiece, the Holy Face, after the Holy Winding-sheet of Turin."

There is no doubt but that Sœur Thérèse's vision, which found its sad and liberal fulfilment in her father's humiliation, was a dispensation of Providence to give the saint a fuller insight into the mystery of the Messias as sufferer and Redeemer. Nothing except great affliction can enable one to fathom some truths of the super-

natural life. But when such affliction is preceded by a prophetic vision, then the soul must indeed be ready to ponder their deep meaning. Sœur Thérèse's ideal of holiness, we must remember, was the figure of Christ as he climbed the hill of Calvary; it was the Saviour's sacred face impressed upon Veronica's veil at the sixth station. And by the prophetic vision granted to her at the age of seven she was predestined to have this devotion. In spite of her tender years, she already grasped the truth which is so hard of acceptance—that true glory to a great extent consists in suffering and in self-effacement. The following quotation is of the utmost importance:

"I then received a grace which I have always regarded as one of the greatest in my life. Our Lord gave me to understand that the only true glory is that which lasts for ever, and that in order to attain it one need not do great deeds, but rather hide oneself from the eyes of others and from one's own self, so that the right hand knoweth not what the left doth."

Later, on her entrance into Carmel, Sœur Thérèse was to go deeper into the matter.

"I understood better than ever in what true glory consists. He whose kingdom is not of this world taught me that the only glory to be coveted lies in wishing to be unknown and esteemed as naught, and in seeking joy in self-abasement. And I wished that my face, like the Face of Jesus, might be as it were hidden and despised, so that no one on earth should recognize me. I longed to suffer and to be despised."

One may therefore, without fear of exaggera-

tion, assert that the prophetic vision of her father directed the saint's thoughts about religion, from the age of reason, towards a deeper understanding of the person and the mission of Jesus Christ. The stumbling-block which the Jews, the folly which the Greeks were never able to accept—the crucified Messias, the symbol of a Christian's life—Sœur Thérèse made her ideal from childhood. But in the Catholic faith devotion to Jesus Christ is inseparable from devotion to his blessed Mother. Three years after the prophetic vision of the just man in affliction, Thérèse, at the age of ten, was favoured with another vision—that of our Lady's smile; she was at the same time miraculously cured of a distressing and alarming illness.

3. The vision of our Lady's smile and her miraculous cure.

This dangerous malady seems to have been brought on by various causes, among them some great mental strain. On October 2, 1882, Pauline, whom the child had chosen as her little mother, entered Carmel. The separation was a cruel one. "I, who had been accustomed to talk with my little mother of all that was in my heart, could now scarcely snatch two or three minutes with her at the end of the family visits." Perhaps the Prioress at that date, Mère Marie de Gonzague, applied the prescriptions of the rule somewhat too literally in this particular case. The great reformer of Carmel had not shown herself so unrelenting; she knew how to interpret the rule and when to make exceptions, remem-

bering that it is written: *The letter killeth, but the spirit quickeneth.* Little Thérèse had always been pensive, even too much so. "Hers," says her elder sister, "was a deep and very thoughtful soul, and I thought she was too sedate and advanced for her age." At school she was in a class of girls all older than herself. At recreation she amused herself by watching her companions' merry frolic from a distance, giving herself to serious thought the while; that was her favourite diversion. She worked hard, and always tried to be first in order to give greater pleasure to her father, her beloved king. "When on rare occasions she did not get good marks, the poor little thing was inconsolable . . . she could not bear to think that her father would not be so happy as usual when he heard her marks."

Thérèse had lost her mother at the age of four; it had been so great a suffering to her mind that her whole character had been unsettled by it. Her little mother Pauline's entrance into a convent had, so to speak, reopened and deepened the wound. Thérèse did not play games; she thought and studied much, even during recreation. Towards the end of 1882 she began to suffer from continual headache, though as yet of a mild description. She made little complaint, so she was allowed to go on with her studies. During the Easter holidays of 1883 her father, Monsieur Martin, went to Paris with his two daughters, Marie and Léonie, and left Thérèse

in charge of her uncle, Monsieur Guérin. The latter allowed himself to talk to the little girl about her dead mother, who was his own sister. It was a serious and a perilous subject for conversation. The wound in Thérèse's heart had not yet healed, and it would, perhaps, have been better not to revive her grief. But it is easy to give advice from a distance and after the event. Thérèse shed tears. Monsieur Guérin " was surprised to learn that one of my age should feel as I did, and determined to do all he could to divert my mind during the holidays." It would have been her salvation.

But it was too late. The mysterious malady declared itself that very evening. The headache became unbearable, and a strange shivering came over her limbs. Thérèse, however, was convinced that she would be able to go to Carmel for her sister Pauline's clothing. And, as a matter of fact, she seemed to be much better, almost herself again, and she witnessed, without apparent fatigue, all the edifying and touching ceremonies of the clothing. She saw Pauline lying dead to the world, upon a carpet of rough frieze surrounded with flowers. The next day her illness increased in gravity. Thérèse was only ten years and three months old. The attacks were of singular violence. She used to hit her head against the wood of the bedstead (it was a large bed and very high). Several times she fell out of bed; the room had a stone floor,

yet she did not hurt herself. The most insignificant objects would take fantastic and terrifying forms during her attacks of dizziness. They made her cry out in terror. Nails in the wall assumed the appearance of long fingers, shrivelled and blackened with fire; her father's hat became a horrible monster. The most soothing medicines were poisons. The little girl would cry: "They want to poison me!"

The story of the cure must be read in the autobiography. Thérèse reached the point of failing to recognize her eldest sister, Marie. The latter made several ingenious attempts to make Thérèse recognize her, but they were all fruitless. She called Thérèse from the garden through the window, held out her arms to her, called her tenderly. She went back into the room. It was all in vain. One can understand that at such a juncture a man of strong character, a clear-sighted and sensible father, realizing that there was no hope, might have buried his head in his hands and have resigned himself in dumb and abject submission to the divine will, and thus have renewed the sacrifice of Abraham. But a mother's heart went further, and, before resigning itself to the inevitable, attempted a miracle. Marie, despairing of all human means, cast herself on her knees at the feet of a statue of our Lady, determined to storm heaven and to obtain the cure of her child from the Mother of God. Léonie and Céline, realizing the heaven-sent

meaning of their elder sister's act, joined of their own accord in her prayer. Who could estimate the power of their silent and unanimous prayer? Thérèse herself, though in the midst of a violent attack, had felt its influence, and had also begun to pray. It is then that the vision took place and that the miracle was wrought.

"Suddenly the statue seemed to come to life and grow beautiful, with a divine beauty that I shall never find words to describe. The expression on our Lady's face was inexpressibly sweet, tender, and compassionate; but what touched me to the very depths of my soul was her gracious smile! Then all my pain vanished, two big tears started to my eyes and fell silently. . . ."

Thérèse was cured. Her face was transfigured by some supernatural illumination, and seemed so radiant that her sisters never doubted the vision. Céline never even questioned Thérèse about it, having had proof of the fact, so to speak. Marie asked her little sister to tell her the secret, and she did so with her angelic candour. As for the cure, it was complete. "All of a sudden," an eyewitness records, "they came to tell Monsieur Guérin, her uncle, that Mademoiselle Thérèse was cured. And the next day she came herself to see us; no trace of her illness remained except some weakness, which soon disappeared." On the following days she felt a slight indisposition as the result of some disagreement, but afterwards, whether as a young girl or as a nun, she never felt the least touch of

the disease. We need not institute a formal inquiry into the disease or its cure. The supernatural character of the vision and of the miracle appears to us to be beyond doubt.

The two mystical phenomena we have just recorded—the prophetic vision of her father or of the just man in affliction, and the vision of our Lady's smile—are the most extraordinary sensible manifestations in the saint's spiritual life. Other exceptional but less striking facts might be mentioned. On the never-to-be-forgotten day, December 25, 1886, on the feast of the Child Jesus, Thérèse, who was then thirteen, very sensitive, and ready to cry at the least thing, was instantaneously cured of her ultra-sensitiveness, and recovered the strength of mind she had lost at her mother's death when four years old, and that by an act of supernatural virtue. It is a typical and most instructive example of moral recovery effected by a single heroic act. But the case does not exceed the limits of moral and mystical laws of psychology. St Thomas Aquinas teaches that an eminent natural or supernatural act can beget the corresponding virtue or be the cause of its recovery.

The conversion of the famous criminal Pranzini, *in extremis*, which Thérèse obtained by her prayers, is something more than a happy coincidence; we see therein the relation of cause to effect. Eight months after recovering her strength of mind, Thérèse, who ardently longed

to save souls, undertook to obtain Pranzini's conversion. She offered to God every sacrifice and prayer she could think of, and at last made the following appeal :

" My God, I am quite sure that thou wilt pardon this unfortunate Pranzini. I should still think so even if he did not confess his sins or give any sign of contrition, because I have such confidence in thy unbounded mercy ; but this is my first sinner, and therefore I beg for just one sign of repentance to reassure me."

The prayer was indeed literally fulfilled. The chaplain who ministered to Pranzini in his last hour was the Abbé Faure. In his published *Memoires* the latter says that the condemned man, with his arms tied behind his back, asked of his own accord, and with emphatic eagerness, for a crucifix, and then kissed it passionately several times. Pranzini was, so to speak, Sœur Thérèse's good thief. Later, at Carmel, when the saint received any offering from her relations or friends, she asked leave to have some Masses said for the repose of Pranzini's soul. " He is my first child," she used to say, with a mother's charm and tenderness ; " I must not forget him ; he must need it after having played so many pranks."

Once Thérèse has entered Carmel and donned the religious habit, we hardly come across any more extraordinary incidents, however closely we glean. Understanding more and more clearly that the Way of Childhood involved the depriva-

tion of signal graces, she did not ask for any more signs. It is true that there is the fall of snow on her clothing day, January 10, 1889, for which she had longed, and which caused some astonishment on account of the mildness of the weather. But from a critical point of view we can only regard it as a providential coincidence, an answer from heaven to a pure soul's prayers. From that date to the last few months before her death—that is to say, for more than eight years—whilst the saint in her cloister led an increasingly contemplative life, and visions like those of her childhood should have multiplied, they completely disappeared. The ever-deepening virtue of the humble nun is daily more lost to sight under the cover and the quiet of simplicity. Sœur Thérèse, who at first, as we have said, astonished the nuns by her perfect regularity and her faithfulness in little things, escaped their notice more and more. She was twenty years of age; she had been four years in the convent; they were accustomed to her unassuming ways, her silence, her tranquil and charming smile.

"Two years beforehand," it is pointed out, "she spoke of her death. But it was a deduction from what was taking place in her soul." So that this is no revelation properly so called, but simply an enlightened understanding of supernatural ways. "Her high degree of perfection, of union with God," another Carmelite very aptly remarks, "as well as her great natural

intelligence, made her very clear-sighted, so that I often thought she had the gift of reading my soul." It is a known fact that very spiritual people, pure and holy souls, have a gift of intuition which, although supernaturalized, is not, strictly speaking, extraordinary.[1]

4. Signal graces of prayer.

As for mystical graces, St Teresa of the Child Jesus was favoured with them, though they were neither marvellous nor sensational. Mère Agnès asked her little sister one day if she had not experienced certain states of prayer. The latter replied:

"Yes, in the garden, several times, during the great night silence in summer I have felt so deep in recollection and my heart so united to God, and I have made such fervent and such loving aspirations to God without the least effort on my part, that it does seem to me that these graces were what our holy mother St Teresa calls 'flights of the spirit.' . . . (A grace she received in the grotto of St Mary Magdalen during her noviciate was followed by several days' quietude.) 'It was as though,' she says, 'a veil were thrown between me and the things of earth. I was completely hidden under our Lady's veil. I no longer was on earth. I did all that I had to do, all my work in the refectory, as though a body had been lent to me. . . . It is hard to explain; it is

[1] "Those persons whose minds are purified ascertain with great facility, some better than others, what is passing in the minds of men, their inclinations and their capacities; and this from certain outward signs, however slight they may be, such as expressions, motions, or gestures. As the devil, being a spirit, can do this, so also the spiritual man, according to the words of the Apostle: *Spiritualis autem judicat omnia.*"—*The Ascent of Mount Carmel,* Bk. II, ch. xxvi.

a supernatural state which only God can give and which is enough to detach a soul from earth for ever afterwards.' "

If one has read any of St Teresa's works and those of the chief spiritual writers, one will admit that this prayer of recollection is fairly common among the mystics. More especially in St Teresa's *Life*, in chapters seventeen and eighteen, which treat of the third and fourth degrees of prayer, will one find those "flights of the spirit" to which Sœur Thérèse alludes, as also that close union of the soul with God which lasts for whole days without hindrance to works of the active life.[1]

The prayer of recollection, when continued for some time, is like a smouldering fire; but at times it darts forth flames, whence the transports of love. When these transports are very eager they pierce our fleshly envelope and can even endanger life. It seems then that fiery darts pierce the heart. Sœur Thérèse on several

[1] St Teresa writes: "In this kind of prayer . . . the will is tied up, and bound, and in condition of enjoying . . . whilst yet on the other side, the understanding and the memory are so free that they are able to treat of business, and to attend to works of charity. The soul . . . in this prayer can also act the part of Martha. So that she now performs the offices both of the active and of the contemplative life, and is able to exercise herself in those businesses and works of charity, which are agreeable to her condition."—*Life*, ch. xviii. During prayer, when there is deep recollection, it sometimes happens that the soul "springs up out of herself as if it were a kind of fire leaping into flame": this is what St Teresa properly calls flights of the spirit. (See *Life*, ch. xviii.)

occasions experienced such transports of love, and once she even felt at the point of death.

"A few days after I had offered myself as victim to the Divine Love, I was in the choir beginning the Stations of the Cross, when I suddenly felt myself wounded by a dart of fire so ardent that I thought I should die. I do not know how to explain this transport: there is no comparison which will serve to describe the intensity of that flame. But oh, what fire! what sweetness! . . . One minute, one second more, and my soul would have been severed from my body. . . . Alas! I found myself on earth again, and dryness at once returned to dwell in my heart."

Oh, what fire! what sweetness! Such exclamations are so many echoes recalling the magnificent mystical symphony St John of the Cross composed on the theme:

> O sweet burn! O delicious wound!
> O tender hand! O gentle touch!
> Savouring of everlasting life. . . .[1]

"Those who receive such graces," writes St John of the Cross, "are destined to transmit their spirit and their virtue to a family of dis-

[1] *The Living Flame of Love*, Stanza ii, verse 1. "The Lord God is a devouring fire, that is, a fire of love. And as his power is infinite, he consumes infinitely, burning with great vehemence, and transforming into himself all he touches. But he burns everything according to the measure of its preparation, some more, others less; and also according to his good pleasure, as, and when, and how, he will. And as this is the infinite fire of love, so when he touches the soul somewhat sharply, the burning heat within it becomes so extreme as to surpass all the fires of the world." Speaking of her wound of love, Sœur Thérèse said in all simplicity to Mère Agnès: "In fact, little Mother, it is what the saints have so often experienced."

ciples." And he finally remarks that after such high favours one will only encounter "the aspiration of love much more ardent than that of interior transports, and which will this time have the requisite energy and force to break the thread and carry off the jewel of the soul." It was in an ecstasy of love that St Teresa of the Child Jesus and of the Holy Face died. Wasted by a slow and relentless disease, the saint had reached the last stage of exhaustion. The agony had been long and terrible. All at once her breathing became weaker and more hurried; the end was very near. She had uttered her supreme act of love: "Oh! . . . I love him! . . . My God, I . . . love thee!"

"We thought it was all over," attests Mère Agnès de Jésus, "when suddenly she raised her eyes, full of life and fire, wherein was reflected a happiness beyond all her hopes. Sœur Marie de l'Eucharistie, who wanted to have a closer view of this gaze of hers, which lasted for the space of a *Credo,* passed a torch to and fro before her eyelids without producing a flicker. It was an ecstasy, a heavenly vision, but one which filled her heart so full of love and gratitude that she could not endure its 'sweet assaults,' and to it she owed the breaking of her chains."

Justly does Mère Agnès de Jésus allude in these last words to the famous pages in which St John of the Cross tells how the saints, aflame with the love of God, die. "No doubt they, too, fall victims to some disease or to old age, but what despatches them is a last aspiration of

love." How could Sœur Thérèse, who from childhood had lived on "aspirations of love," have died otherwise than of longing to leave this world to be united with her Beloved? Even here below she already dwelt in heaven. "I cannot conceive," she used to say, "what more I shall have in heaven than here. I shall see God, it is true; but as to being with him, I am already that here on earth."

5. Predictions concerning her mission after death.

In the last few months before her death St Teresa of the Child Jesus had foretold, with amazing vividness and daring, her mission after death and the prodigious success of her autobiography. Before quoting the testimonies to this foreknowledge, several of which are well known, we feel bound to proffer a remark which we consider of great importance. It is this: that in such cases of foreknowledge it behoves us to make great allowance for character and disposition. A great many Catholics are fain to imagine that sanctity dispenses with natural genius or rare natural knowledge. This is not the case. Thomistic theology, on the contrary, teaches that, as a rule, God chooses men of superior intelligence and genius to carry out the missions of his divine Providence. Now, one of the signs of superior intelligence is that it daily acquires a higher and truer consciousness of itself. An animal has no consciousness of its acts or conceptions; a child before the age of reason is only partially conscious of them, and

many grown men are only very imperfectly so. The more spiritual we become, the more we realize all the impulses, the ideas, the thoughts which impel and guide us. When we find a Schopenhauer predicting that his doctrine will not be appreciated until nearly a century after his death, and a Stendhal asserting that he will not be read until 1880, and when such predictions are realized, we are the more disposed to make full allowance for genius in such matters. Of course, we do not want in any way to insinuate that St Teresa of the Child Jesus was not favoured with supernatural lights as to her mission after death, but in studying her more closely we have discovered that she was highly gifted with one of the chief properties of genius —a true consciousness of herself and of her work. This consciousness of her superiority, her holiness, needless to say, was in no wise prejudicial to her humility.

"I am too little now to be guilty of vanity: I am likewise too little to endeavour to prove my humility by fine-sounding words. I prefer to own in all simplicity that *he that is mighty hath done great things in me.*"

St Teresa of the Child Jesus was well aware that she had by her own research, her trials, her studies, her continual thought, opened out a new and very timely way to sanctity. "Perceiving clearly," her sister Mère Agnès de Jésus tells us, "that she had discovered a priceless treasure, she wanted to show it to everyone." The saint

herself declared that if she greatly desired that her sister Céline should enter the Carmel of Lisieux, it was not so much out of sisterly affection, as one might too readily believe, but in order to "communicate to her the lights" she had received concerning the Way of Childhood. We shall show in the next chapter that she had not at first thought of writing her autobiography for posterity; but eventually she had discovered the edifying and instructive value of the book, and had earnestly urged its publication.

"The manuscript must be published after my death without the slightest delay. If you put off doing it, if you are rash enough to speak to anyone, except to our Mother, about it, the devil will lay countless snares to prevent the publication, and yet it is so important. But if you do all that lies in your power not to let it be hindered, do not fear any of the difficulties you will meet with. In the case of my mission, as in that of Joan of Arc, the will of God will be accomplished despite the envy of men."—"You think, then, that by means of this book you will do good to souls?"—"Yes, it is a means which God will employ."

In these memorable words we see Sœur Thérèse comparing her mission to that of Joan of Arc. It is because when yet a child, about ten or eleven years old, while reading the life of this heroine of France, she had had the intuition that she, too, was destined to a glorious mission. "In my admiration for the patriotic deeds of the heroines of France, especially of the Venerable Joan of Arc, I longed to do what they had

done. . . . Then, as I reflected that I was born for great things, and sought the means to attain them, it was revealed to me interiorly that my personal glory would consist in becoming a saint." So it was by an interior revelation that she had, while yet a child, been assured of her high vocation. We shall then be somewhat less surprised to find that a few weeks before her death she warned her sisters with a considered simplicity and candour to heed her sanctity:

"About the month of August, 1897, about six weeks before her death, I was beside her bed with Mère Agnès de Jésus and Sœur Geneviève. All at once she looked at me with a heavenly expression, and said very clearly: 'You know quite well that you are nursing a little saint.'"

She had, with a singularly detailed and realistic precision, foreseen how successful her book would be for the edification of all Catholics. When they told her that her sister would be inconsolable for her death, she answered: "Don't trouble; Mère Agnès de Jésus will not have time to think about her grief, for to the end of her life she will be so busy with me that she will not be able to cope with it all." And again, in order to comfort her sister, she told her: "After my death you must go where the letter-box is; you will find comfort there."

If natural talent can explain up to a certain point the fact that Sœur Thérèse foresaw the great stir her book and her doctrine would make,

intuitions or supernatural revelations alone, it is very evident, could have given her the assurance that she would do wonders after her death, that she would work miracles and marvels. "You will see, it will be like a shower of roses. . . . At present, like Joan of Arc in prison, I am in irons, but my deliverance will soon come, and with it the time of my victories. . . ." In one of the numbers of the *Annals of the Propagation of the Faith* was described the appearance of a beautiful lady, robed in white, beside a cradle. "Later," said Sœur Thérèse, "I shall visit little baptized children like that." Sœur Geneviève, less than a month before her death, made the following remark to her: "To think that they are still expecting you in Indo-China!"—"I shall soon go there," answered Sœur Thérèse; "if you could only know how quickly I shall make my rounds . . . if you could only know what plans I am making, what a lot of things I shall do in heaven!" And it was about that time that she uttered those memorable words which so many Catholics now know by heart: "I feel that I am about to enter into my rest. . . . I feel that my mission is soon to begin, my mission to make others love God as I love him, to teach souls my little way. I want to spend my heaven in doing good upon earth."

Sœur Thérèse had acquired the habit of keeping the divine words in her heart, like our blessed Lady; she must have had a foreknow-

ledge of many secrets which she did not disclose. Had she any suspicion that she might be canonized? She may not have said so in so many words. But as she told her sisters to keep the flower petals with which she caressed the wounds of her crucified Lord, and the lashes which fell from her eyelids, to make people happy later on, she evidently foresaw that the faithful would honour the smallest relic of her. She did not prevent her sister from catching on a piece of linen the tears of divine love which ran down her cheeks. Unless we reject the evidence, we must acknowledge that St Teresa of the Child Jesus, in the last days of her life, had been granted an intimate, extraordinary, and supernatural revelation of her holiness and her providential mission. She was endowed with the gift of prophecy, as Benedict XV has asserted.

After duly admiring these extraordinary gifts, let us recall the essential observation with which we began: it is not on account of these exceptional graces, visions, or prophecies that Sœur Thérèse was canonized. And in order better to decide the difficulties which may occur to our minds, we should, in point of the extraordinary, distinguish carefully between the object and the mode. Sœur Thérèse, it has been aptly said, performed the most ordinary actions of life extraordinarily well. The epithet "extraordinary," which is itself somewhat vague and needs defining, chiefly refers to the mode or manner in

which the saint performed her daily duties. So that when people object that the little saint did nothing extraordinary we shall deny this in regard to the mode of perfection which she brought to all her actions. We shall only concede that, as to the object of her mission, she was not destined by God to do deeds which were signal in matter and in quantity, or perceptibly great. But this absence of extraordinary acts is precisely one of the negative characteristics which is most characteristic of her way. Divine Providence willed to show us, by an illustrious example, that charity is a gift far higher than all visions, ecstasies, prophecies, or miracles, and that at the bottom it constitutes all sanctity. St Teresa of the Child Jesus has been sent to our inventive and restless age to remind us that purely spiritual and interior heights are far superior to material and sensible ones. *Major autem est caritas.*

CHAPTER IV

THE FOURTH NEGATIVE CHARACTERISTIC OF SŒUR THÉRÈSE'S SPIRITUAL LIFE: NO MULTIFARIOUS ACTIVITY—HER AUTOBIOGRAPHY

1. The Saint deliberately preferred contemplation to action.

Sœur Thérèse de l'Enfant Jésus preferred the contemplative life to the active life, the prayer of Mary Magdalen to Martha's bustling labours. She chose the better part, *optimam partem elegit*. What a lesson to unbelievers, to men of the world, and even to some Catholics, who loudly proclaim that they cannot understand the contemplative life of enclosed nuns! Men with enlightened but utilitarian minds, of too exclusively philosophical a bent, who before all things look for natural virtue and the wisdom of this world, will never understand the high utility of the mystical and contemplative life in the economy of Christianity. To listen to them, in our active age, only active religious are wanted, Sisters of Charity, nursing sisters, Little Sisters of the Poor, priests who devote themselves to the most practical forms of the apostolate, parish work, schools and clubs. How rarely we come across men who appreciate other work than their own; how narrow-minded and unfair conceit makes them! The canonization of St Teresa of the Child Jesus is a signal and providential answer to their failure to understand the contemplative life.

The saint who is most appreciated, admired, and invoked in the twentieth century is not, as one might have expected, a nun devoted to the most charitable and active form of apostolate, but a young nun who entered Carmel at the age of fifteen, who died at the age of twenty-four, and who did nothing but pray, suffer, and obey. She did not nurse the plague-stricken, the poor, the sick, the aged; she did not save her country, as Joan of Arc did; she did not bring back the papacy from Avignon to Rome as St Catherine of Siena did; she did not do any great deeds, and yet we find her exerting an unparalleled moral influence throughout the world. There is no saint, after our blessed Lady, who is so often invoked by Catholics to-day as St Teresa of the Child Jesus.

Not only does the Way of Spiritual Childhood not exact activities, it even bans them to a certain extent. We have already noticed three negative characteristics of the Way of Childhood; the absence of self-imposed and violent mortifications, and complicated methods of prayer, of visions, ecstasies, and extraordinary phenomena of the mystical life; now we come to the fourth negative characteristic; the Way of Childhood bans any multifarious, over-anxious, and over-strenuous activity. This characteristic is of the utmost importance. It is safe to assert that if the spiritual life is on the decrease in Catholic countries, in parishes, in religious congregations,

and in religious Orders, it is in great part due to the excessive multiplication of activity, of business, of restlessness. The fact is so evident that one would have to be ignorant of the real state of affairs to deny it, or else deeply concerned in the question.

It is most instructive to note that Sœur Thérèse de l'Enfant-Jésus as a child reacted against an excessive love of activity. She realized that she would have to swim against the strong, swift tide of multifarious and feverish activity, which sweeps so many people down the slope of slackness. She had the courage to do it. We must not indeed fancy that Thérèse as a girl, with her fair hair, her blue-grey eyes, her lily-white complexion, had a lymphatic, indolent, placid, or sheepish temperament, and that she had neither the initiative nor the aptitude for active works of the apostolate. "Sœur Thérèse de l'Enfant-Jésus," we are told, "had a very active and energetic soul beneath a gentle and charming outward appearance; in her acts she always displayed a finely tempered character and a virile soul." She felt drawn towards good works, and would gladly have looked after and brought up orphans as a daughter of St Vincent de Paul.

"Little children," so her sister Léonie attests, "completely captivated Thérèse's innocent heart. I shall never forget her angelic smile and the kisses she showered on them, especially if they were poor children. The unkempt and dirty appearance of these children never

lessened her demonstrations of affection for them, although she herself was always so clean and neat."

The "conversion" of December 25, 1886, which on Christmas night, at the age of thirteen, had suddenly restored her strength of mind and given her a virile courage, had only increased her attraction for the apostolate: "At the same time her soul visibly developed and began to find an outlet in works of zeal and charity. She dreamt of saving souls and with eager generosity worked for the conversion of sinners." But the most significant incident in the struggle which Thérése as a girl had to wage against her inclination to the active life, which would have made her averse to contemplation, is recorded for us by her sister Céline:

"I had become," her sister Céline tells us, "Thérèse's sole confidant. The religious life seemed to her, above all, a means of saving souls. She even thought of becoming a missionary nun to this end; but the hope of saving more souls by mortification and self-sacrifice determined her to shut herself up in Carmel. The Servant of God herself confided to me the reason of this decision. It was in order to suffer more, and thereby to win souls for our Lord. She considered that it was harder to nature to work without ever seeing the fruit of one's labours, without encouragement, without any kind of diversion, and that the hardest work of all was that which one undertakes upon one's own self, in order to gain the mastery over self. And so it was this dying life, precious above all others for the salvation of souls, that she wanted to embrace, hoping, as she herself said, to be made prisoner as soon as possible in order to give souls the joys of heaven. In fine, when she entered

Carmel, her special aim was to pray for priests and to immolate herself for the needs of Holy Church. She called this kind of apostolate, 'trading wholesale,' because through the Head she reached the members.[1] Further, she loudly proclaimed her personal intention in the canonical examination which preceded her profession: 'I am come,' she said, 'to save souls, and, above all, to pray for priests.' This answer is peculiarly her own. Everyone answers as she thinks best on this occasion."

This page, which we have been careful to cite in full, enables us to probe deep into Sœur Thérèse's most intimate intentions. We should remember the truth the saint here formulates, which is moreover taken from Scripture: "The hardest work of all is that which one undertakes upon one's own self, in order to gain the mastery over self." We should likewise remember that striking expression: "This dying life, precious above all others for the salvation of souls." To what heights of self-abnegation, and of all sensible satisfaction, what purity of intention and faith in the supernatural must one not have attained to be really convinced that a life of mortification, asceticism and mysticism, a life of dying to this world and its works, is the most fertile in fruits of salvation! St Teresa of the Child Jesus chose the silent cloistered life of Carmel rather than that of a missionary because she believed with all the force of her soul that, other things being equal, the contemplative and

[1] Père Matteo uses a happy word in this connection: "She exercises her apostolate for priests, because they are *multipliers*."

penitential life was of greater benefit to the Church. Again what a lesson for Catholics who are becoming unable to understand the utility of the contemplative life.

"You see," St Teresa of the Child Jesus used to tell her novices, "to have beautiful and holy thoughts, to write books or lives of the saints does not count so much as answering as soon as you are called."

How true were Sœur Thérèse's words! Verily to have beautiful and holy thoughts, to express them in discourses, conferences, and sermons; to write fine and learned books, or lives of saints; all this, unless one mortifies oneself, unless one dies daily more and more to the world and to oneself, unless one lives a more fervent interior life, does not convert mankind. The saint was so intimately convinced of this that she relied little on exterior activity. "Sœur Thérèse," we are told, "made light of any work she did." She was on the watch to moderate her novices' eagerness for their work. She loved that saying in the *Imitation of Christ:* "Let the unquiet be as unquiet as he will . . . but do thou keep thyself in good peace." And Sœur Geneviève, her sister Céline, very truly remarks: "It was part of her little way of self-surrender to moderate any over-eagerness in our work."

To a novice who was displaying too much zeal in beating and folding blankets, she pointed out what a large share unconscious conceit may have

in such bustle. In short, Sœur Thérèse taught them to preserve peace and recollection :

" You give yourselves up too much to what you are doing," she used to tell us. " You worry about your work as if you alone bore the responsibility of it. Are you much concerned at this moment as to what is happening in other Carmelite convents, and whether the nuns there are busy or not? Does their work prevent you from praying or meditating? Well, just in the same way you ought to detach yourselves from your own tasks, conscientiously spending the time allotted to them, but with perfect freedom of heart."

Sœur Thérèse never advised people to do anything unless she had been the first to set the example. Her moderation, however, was not always quite understood. Can we be surprised at this? Had not Martha been the first to criticize Mary's attitude, even in our Lord's presence? One of the lay-sisters, very busy in the convent kitchen, did not appreciate Sœur Thérèse's ever recollected demeanour. " Look at her walking, she doesn't hurry herself; when is she going to begin her work, she is good for nothing!" This is only a faint echo of the criticisms which bustling Catholics, too much taken up with good works, will always make against mystics and contemplatives : " They do nothing, they are good for nothing; whenever will they begin to do some work?" But the voice of the Lord which abideth for ever, will invariably answer : " Ye are careful and troubled over many things : one thing only is necessary."

St John of the Cross, whom Sœur Thérèse had so pondered over as to be able to quote him by heart, had made himself the voice of the Lord, when in the *Spiritual Canticle* he defended interior souls against the unjust accusations of those who are steeped in worldliness :

"Worldly people," he writes, "are in the habit of censuring those who give themselves up in earnest to God, regarding them as extravagant, in their withdrawal from the world, and in their manner of life. They say also of them that they are useless for all matters of importance, and lost to everything the world prizes and respects ! This reproach the soul meets in the best way : boldly and courageously despising it and everything else the world can lay to its charge. Having attained to a living love of God, it makes little account of all else . . . it boasts that it has committed that folly, and that it is lost to the world and to itself for the Beloved. . . . But few spiritual persons arrive at this perfect courage and resolution in their conduct. For though some attempt to practise it, and some even think themselves proficients therein, they never entirely lose themselves on certain points connected with the world or self, so as to be perfectly detached for the sake of Christ, despising appearances and the opinion of the world."

St John of the Cross' teaching on works of the active life, and the caution this great mystical doctor, like the author of the *Imitation,* employs in regard to multifarious and strenuous apostolic activity, involving attachment "to the world or to self," and consequently of very relative efficacy, this teaching of the great masters is also that of Sœur Thérèse.

2. How Thérèse came to write her Autobiography.

Does this mean that good works are neither useful nor necessary? Are we to banish from our life all apostolic activity, the corporal and spiritual works of mercy, all teaching, preaching, newspapers, and books? Of course not. The question is simply one of proportion, a point to which we shall revert at the close of this chapter, and Sœur Thérèse herself, contemplative as she was, and consecrated to prayer and silence, produced a work. She wrote, at the end of her life, a book which she thought fit to be published and given to the world. Did she not assert that this book would be of service for the salvation of souls, and to the Church at large? Then let us see how St Teresa of the Child Jesus came to write her autobiography. It will be no doubt both useful and interesting to ascertain how this masterpiece, unique of its kind, gradually was evolved.

Freethinkers of the school of Anatole France and Voltaire have propounded an easy explanation of the origin of this book, as we remarked in the Preface. It was the priests who ordered Sœur Thérèse to compile it, they gave her the pattern and guided her pen: "Even supposing the little book is not apocryphal, it is worthless. It is a plagiarism of St Teresa's well-known ideas, and a feeble awkward plagiarism at that, and sugary withal. . . . But this very mediocre imitation leads one to suspect that the girl did not write the book, or else that someone guided her pen and touched up her expressions. . . ."

We may without fear of mistake assert that the writer of these lines was most certainly ignorant of the conditions under which Sœur Thérèse de l'Enfant-Jésus compiled her manuscript, so erroneous are his suppositions, and so contrary to the facts. Sœur Thérèse's autobiography is her own spontaneous work; it is not an imitation but a creation. In compiling it the saint did not copy any pattern, nor was she helped by anyone. The facts of her personal, family, and monastic life which she records were in no way invented or disfigured, as many witnesses can attest. A very brief study of the book will prove that it contains a very individual conception of the interior life; in a word, it is an entirely original and true masterpiece.

When a book is an autobiography it cannot be separated from the life it describes. The first and the greatest of St Teresa of the Child Jesus' masterpieces was her own life. She had from her earliest childhood down to the last moments of her existence cherished the ambition of becoming a great saint; she had no other end than to grow in perfection day by day. Between an artist and a saint there is this difference, that the artist makes the execution of some work outside himself his end in life, whereas a saint pursues one only aim, his own sanctification, the perfecting of his own life. Sœur Thérèse's masterpiece, then, was her life, and when it was close upon its end, she had only to commit it to writing.

We need not be surprised, then, that Sœur Thérèse should have written her book at one cast, without plan or erasure, in her leisure moments; the book had been preparing, though quite unconsciously, for nearly twenty years. As a child Thérèse was most observant; she had the gift of intuition, she studied character, and she studied herself. "When she was quite a little thing she did not talk much, but she noticed everything, and made ripe reflections thereon." We should recall what the saint herself wrote about her earliest years: "Virtue had charms for me. I think that I was in much the same dispositions as I now am, and already had great control over my actions. Thus, I preferred to be silent rather than to make excuses for myself." She wrote in the same strain with reference to her mother's death: "I did not tell anyone of the feelings which filled my heart; I looked on and I listened in silence. I saw a great deal, too, which they would fain have hidden from me." After her mother's death, Thérèse became a thoughtful child, with the gift of psychological reflection in a very marked degree. Together with the great self-control of which she speaks, she acquired an alert consciousness of what was passing in her heart and soul. By little acts of self-denial, by mortifying her desires, she began that study of self which was already recommended by Socrates and Plato.

When she made her first Communion at the

Benedictines' school, she was still found to be thoughtful and observant: "During playtime, I often amused myself by watching my companions' merry games from a distance, giving myself up to serious thought. It was my favourite diversion." As a rule, people of a philosophical bent of mind make good story-tellers, because they observe the ways of mankind, and can realize the impression their story will make on men's minds and hearts. Even at the age of twelve or thirteen, Thérèse had a rare gift for story-telling. "At other times I told stories, and the older girls often joined the circle of my listeners." The stories Thérèse told must have been very attractive to have made the older girls leave off their games to come and listen to her. Was it surprising that the child should one day become capable of telling her own story? And here is yet another gift, although of secondary importance, which shows that Thérèse had powers of observation; she shone at what in everyday parlance is called taking people off. "She was very witty and very merry. She had a special gift for mimicking other people's voices and mannerisms, but this pastime never degenerated into mockery; she knew when to stop with perfect tact."

Sœur Thérèse, then, had observed and had thought much. The important happenings, more especially in her own life, had been the object of her meditations. To think over one's past life in order to discern the ways of divine Providence,

and to thank God for the graces granted to one, is surely one of the principles of the spiritual life. In the cloister, the saint sometimes called to mind the faulty tendencies of her youth, which were so fortunately checked by the wise upbringing at home at Les Buissonets; she thanked God for the favours she received at the time of her first confession, her first Communion, and during her journey to Rome. Had she not made a resolution never to forget the wonders she had seen on her pilgrimage? I said to myself: "Later on, when the time of trial comes, when I am shut up in Carmel and shall only be able to see a tiny bit of sky, I will remember this day, and it will give me fresh heart; I will then make light of my petty interests." The saint had foreseen "the religious life as it really is, with all its constraints, its little daily sacrifices made in secret. I understood how easily one might become wrapped up in self and forget the high end of one's vocation."

The more one studies the life of St Teresa of the Child Jesus, the more one wonders at the way everything was thought out before it came to be voluntarily accomplished. Most men let themselves be guided by circumstances, the inspiration of their passions, their own interests, the drift of things and the storms of existence; properly speaking, they do not live their life; they are ships without a pilot and without a rudder, carried along all unconscious by the tide, and, in the end, cast up on some unknown shore.

Sœur Thérèse, on the contrary, had foreseen the difficulties; she governed her life with entire consciousness of its meaning, and steered her bark straight on to the port of perfection. That is why, when she had already nearly attained to sanctity, she had a fine tale to tell of the passage, and this was her autobiography.

Berryer was fond of saying of improvisers that they never improvised. "Being well steeped in a certain idea, or in some feeling long dwelt upon, they have repeated the same thing over and over again, and when the opportunity occurs of expressing it in a loud and intelligible voice, the only merit they have in the vivacity of its expression is due to the maturity of its reflection." A similar preparation preceded the composition of Sœur Thérèse's autobiography. When the promoter of the cause of canonization asked Mère Agnès de Jésus (her sister Pauline) if the autobiography had revealed incidents or thoughts unknown to her, she answered: "Certainly not: there is nothing in the manuscript which we had not already learnt in our talks together." Before setting out on her pilgrimage to Rome, Thérèse had, in the church of Notre-Dame-des-Victoires in Paris, commended the preservation of her innocence to our Lady in a very special manner. "I knew quite well," she wrote, "that I should come across things which might disturb me; knowing nothing of evil, I feared lest I might happen upon it." The remark was not made up

on the spur of the moment. "These words," says Mère Agnès de Jésus, "she often repeated to me, like everything else in the story of her life." Some of the paragraphs had already figured in her letters. "She wrote and told me her feelings on the day of her first Communion; they were afterwards recorded in the story of her life." One sees what slow and individual labour preceded the writing of the book. We must then abandon the untenable theory of a plagiarism, and acknowledge that it is thus that masterpieces are made; they presuppose long experience and continual thought. After which the execution is often as swift and easy, as the preparation was slow and laborious.

By what concourse of seemingly insignificant circumstances, in reality the result of supernatural impulses converging to one end, was Sœur Thérèse led to begin writing a book which she carried in her soul? The cause of canonization tells us this with a fulness of detail which leaves nothing to be desired. At the close of the year 1894, on a winter evening at night recreation, and not as has been said and written by an unconscious mistake, at midnight after matins, the two elder sisters, Sœur Marie du Sacré-Cœur and Mère Agnès de Jésus, were talking freely with Sœur Thérèse de l'Enfant-Jésus. The latter was telling such charming stories of her childhood that Sœur Marie, in her delight, turned to Mère Agnés de Jésus, who was Prioress at the

time, and exclaimed: "Mother, you ought to tell her to write down her childhood's memories." Sœur Thérèse showed some reluctance. She feared lest it might cause her thoughts to wander too far afield. Mère Agnès de Jésus was of the same opinion. However, she yielded to Sœur Marie du Sacré-Cœur's entreaties, and bade Sœur Thérèse write down the memories of her childhood and bring her the result on January 21, 1896, her feast-day.

Neither Sœur Thérèse, nor Mère Agnès de Jésus, nor Sœur Marie du Sacré-Cœur ever thought that the work would be published; the saint's own sisters bear witness to the fact, which is beyond all doubt. Yet it is true that, without their knowledge, they were guided by a higher instinct. When Sœur Marie du Sacré-Cœur exclaimed: "Tell her to write down her childhood's memories," it was because she considered them worthy of remembrance—as far as she and her sisters were concerned—both on account of their content and on account of the skill with which Sœur Thérèse recounted them. When actions are worthy of remembrance—that is, when their moral beauty and value bring them within the range of all—the wish will always be expressed that such wealth may not be allowed to be lost in oblivion. Man's mind intuitively discerns ideas and facts which are worthy to be handed down to posterity. A poor lay-sister, Sœur Saint-Pierre, who had been the object of Sœur Thérèse's

heroic charity, was right when she somewhat pompously remarked : " Such examples of virtue must not remain hidden under a bushel." Mankind possesses a patrimony of heroism and holiness, and the lowliest minds sometimes discern, as by some special instinct, virtuous actions which are worthy of swelling this heritage of the ages. Thérèse's life contained sufficient exceptional events; her miraculous cure, the vision of her afflicted father, her conversion on Christmas night, her pilgrimage to Rome, her entrance into Carmel at the age of fifteen, etc., to make them seem worthy of narration. We have already said that Sœur Thérèse had the gift of story-telling; at the convent she had composed poems, some of which are excellent. Granted these conditions, it may be said that some day or other she might well be called upon to write down her remembrances. But a sign from divine Providence was needed; the Prioress, Mère Agnès de Jésus, gave Sœur Thérèse this sign from above; she gave her the order to write.

Without the slightest delay, the nun set to work, if such writing can be called work. The subject-matter was ready to hand. She took an exercise book worth about a penny, and in her small, upright, running, and careful writing, without flourishes or dashes, a classical, not a romantic, hand, which betrayed a recollected and self-disciplined soul, she wrote her autobiography. She was only able to write during her

free time, stintingly conceded by the Carmelite rule. We noted, when discussing the question of method, that Sœur Thérèse had no great love for mathematical methods. She made no plan, nor did she foresee any divisions. At the moment, always affecting, when the author is about to take up his pen to write the opening sentence of his book, Sœur Thérèse knelt down before the statue of our Lady of the smile, to which she owed her miraculous cure when a child, prayed for a few moments, then took up her New Testament, read a few verses, and without further precaution, began her work.

"Before taking up my pen, I went and knelt before our Lady's statue, the one which has given us so many proofs of the Queen of heaven's motherly love for us. I besought her to guide my hand, that I might not write a single line which would be displeasing to her. Then, opening the holy Gospels, my eyes lighted on the words: *And Jesus, going up into a mountain, called unto him whom he would himself.*"

The first page of the autobiography was begun; the sentences followed one another in even flow. Sœur Thérèse told her story very frankly in simple obedience. While she was working with the community in the wash, and when sweeping, she probably thought about the pages she was going to write, otherwise she did not occupy her mind with the subject. The work took shape in her mind, long steeped in philosophical and religious thoughts, without either haste or delay, spontaneously and smoothly. She did not con-

sult any books or notes, dictionaries or grammars. Mère Agnès de Jésus had simply handed her some family papers, letters from her mother or from her sisters. The saint did not trouble in the least about what may be called technique in composing her book. Her wholly spontaneous genius improvised and wrought with gentle warmth, without any sudden rise or fall, in the pure and still atmosphere of Carmel. She did not even take the trouble to divide her work into chapters. In the opening pages she merely indicated three sharply defined periods from her childhood to her entrance into Carmel. It was Père Godefroy Madelaine, a Premonstratensian, who in agreement with Mère Agnès de Jésus, broke up the book into chapters.

As the Preface to the latest editions has told us, Sœur Thérèse's work originally comprised the first eight chapters only. Begun quite at the end of 1894, the book was finished by January 21, 1896, the feast of St Agnes. Entering the nuns' choir for night prayers, Sœur Thérèse on her knees presented the Prioress with the narrative she had been bidden to write. Mère Agnès de Jésus, whose term of office as Prioress was close upon its end, and whose time was wholly taken up with her many duties, absent-mindedly put the book down on the desk in front of her stall, then carried it up to her cell and put it away. A few days later the sisters had to elect a Prioress again. The elec-

tion was a lengthy affair. Mère Agnès de Jésus had won the nuns' esteem by her gentle firmness, and Mère Marie de Gonzague by her prestige retained her partisans. After the seventh scrutiny the latter was elected. In a religious community authority is made over from one to another without complications of any sort. For all this, Mère Agnès de Jésus had been so taken up with these changes as completely to forget the manuscript to which she attached little importance otherwise, and Sœur Thérèse, in her utter detachment, and seeking only to live in peace and oblivion, took good care not to make the slightest allusion to it. No thought could have been further from their minds than that of publishing a masterpiece. A couple of months passed. Mère Agnès de Jésus, a simple nun again, with more time on her hands, came across the manuscript, read it, and was edified and delighted; on the days when the rule allowed conversation, she communicated it to her sisters.

A few weeks later, on April 4, 1896, which was Good Friday, a decisive date in Sœur Thérèse's life, the disease of which she was to die suddenly declared itself. The saint had said nothing to her sisters about it, but her state visibly grew worse. In the early months of 1896, the more clear-sighted among the nuns feared a speedy end. Mère Agnès de Jésus realized that the manuscript of the autobiography, precious as it was, was incomplete.

Sœur Thérèse had scarcely touched upon her life as a nun. But Mère Agnès de Jésus was no longer her superior, she could not command her sister, and the saint would never have consented to begin writing again without an express order from authority.[1]

How was the Prioress to be induced to give this order? A Carmelite write her life! Such a thing had never been done in the Carmel of Lisieux. Mère Marie de Gonzague was a stanch upholder of tradition, and very masterful, she might refuse outright. St Teresa of Avila had thrown her commentary on the *Canticle of Canticles* into the fire, simply because her confessor had expressed his surprise at her having tackled so high and so thorny a subject. Sœur Thérèse was quite capable of subjecting her manuscript to the same fate. "What if our Mother were to throw it into the fire," Mère Agnès de Jésus once said to her. Sœur Thérèse answered: "Well, I should not be in the least bit sorry about it, nor should I have the slightest doubt as to my mission. I should only think

[1] To a nun who expressed a wish to write the memoirs of her vocation, the saint replied: "Mind you don't do anything of the sort. You cannot do so without permission and I advise you not to ask for it. For my own part, I should not like to write anything about my life without an express order, and one which I had not solicited. It is more humble not to write anything about oneself. The great graces of one's life, such as the grace of one's vocation, cannot be forgotten. The memory of those graces will avail you more if you confine yourself to going over them in your mind than if you commit them to paper."

that God will answer my prayers in some other way."

The manuscript, however, was in urgent need of being completed by the saint, who had to write down her views on the interior life, on the Way of Spiritual Childhood. Mère Agnès de Jésus still waited, putting off from day to day. Sœur Thérèse de l'Enfant-Jésus was visibly wasted with fever, and there was no denying the fact that a fatal conclusion might be imminent. Mère Agnès de Jésus determined to intervene :

" Seeing Sœur Thérèse de l'Enfant-Jésus so ill, four months before her death, on the evening of June 2, 1897, I went to Mother Prioress : ' Mother, I said, I cannot sleep until I have told you a secret. Whilst I was Prioress, Sœur Thérèse wrote down some remembrances of her childhood under obedience and in order to give me pleasure. These I read over again the other day ; they are very pretty, but you will not get much out of them to help you in writing her obituary notice, for there is very little about her life in religion. If you tell her to do so, she might write something more serious, and I am certain you would have something far better than what I have.' Our Lord blessed my enterprise, and the next morning our Mother bade Sœur Thérèse de l'Enfant-Jésus continue her story. I had already chosen an exercise book for her, but she thought it was too good, though it was quite an ordinary one, and she was afraid she might commit a fault against holy poverty by using it. She asked me whether she ought not at least to write between the lines so as to use less paper. I answered that she was too ill to tire herself by writing like that, and that she ought on the contrary to leave plenty of space between the lines and write very large."

It was quite true that Sœur Thérèse was too ill to write between the lines. About a month after she resumed her work, at the beginning of July, 1897, the pen dropped from her hands. She had written about fifty pages, without any erasures, the ninth and tenth chapters of her autobiography. She had been warned that these few pages might be used in drawing up an obituary notice, but the spontaneity of her style was by no means diminished on that account. She asked Mère Agnès de Jésus: "On what subject do you want me to write—on charity, on the novices?" She did so at once, without further question. As a matter of fact, she wrote chiefly on charity and on the Way of Self-surrender. As she was so weak by this time, she was put into a sort of invalid's chair, which was wheeled out into the garden as far as the chestnut walk. There in the height of the summer of 1897, she wrote, for Carmelites in particular, the last pages of what may be called her spiritual will and testament. The novices who wanted her advice used continually to come and disturb her. "I am writing on charity," said Sœur Thérèse, "but I have not done what I wanted to do: it could not be worse expressed. . . . I assure you there is no coherence. But still, it is what I think." True, chapters nine and ten are not written with any more method, or plan, or coherence than some chapters in the *Imitation*, but it is none the less true that they contain the

substance of the saint's thought. How little the method matters when a soul writes of its own proper genius! The last lines Sœur Thérèse wrote in pencil, for she was so exhausted that she could not have made the effort of constantly dipping her pen into the inkpot, assume a very special importance in our eyes. They are the parting recommendations of a saint, and they are addressed not so much to Carmelites as to us poor sinners. That a truly angelic soul like that of Sœur Thérèse should surrender herself with all the confidence of a child to the divine mercy is not surprising, but can we, who can neither count nor measure the number and the weight of our sins, practise such boundless confidence? Sœur Thérèse anticipated and refuted this dangerous and common objection by writing these last lines in pencil with her failing hand:

"It is not because I have been preserved from mortal sin that I lift up my heart to God in love and trust. I feel that even if I had on my conscience every crime one could commit, I should lose nothing of my confidence; my heart broken with sorrow, I would throw myself into the arms of my Saviour. I know that he loves the Prodigal Son, I have heard his words to St Mary Magdalen, to the woman taken in adultery, and to the woman of Samaria. No one could frighten me, for I know what to think of his mercy and his love."

We can take it for certain that Sœur Thérèse would have done as she said. If, as a result of a too liberal education, of unchecked affections,

of fiery passions, she had been led to commit lamentable sins, she would not have hesitated, assisted by grace, to return to her Father in heaven with more confidence than the Prodigal Son or St Mary Magdalen.

The pages addressed to the Prioress, Mère Marie de Gonzague, constitute, as we have said, chapters nine and ten of the autobiography. The last chapter, the eleventh, was dedicated to the saint's eldest sister. During the month of September, 1896, about nine months before the two preceding chapters were written, Sœur Marie du Sacré-Cœur had asked Sœur Thérèse to leave her some remembrance, and to set down in writing what she understood by "her little spiritual way." Needless to say, leave had been asked and obtained from the Mother Prioress. Thérèse began to write in all simplicity: "My darling sister, you ask me to leave you a remembrance. Since our Mother allows it, it is a great joy to come and talk with you who are my sister twice over." But after this simple prologue, Sœur Thérèse's soul gently soars aloft, and leaving earth behind, soon attains to sublime heights on charity:

"This is all our Lord asks of us," she exclaimed. "He has no need of our works—he has need of our love. . . . I ask for love. To love thee, sweet Lord, is all my desire. Great deeds are not for me: I cannot preach the Gospel or shed my blood. No matter! My brothers work in my stead, and I, a little child, stand

close beside the royal throne, and love thee for all those who are in the strife."

"O sweet Jesus, I love thee. . . . I love the Church, my mother, I bear in mind that the least act of pure love is of greater value to her than all other works put together."

"O eternal Word, O my Saviour! Thou art the divine Eagle whom I love, and who lurest me. . . . Thou who ascending into light inaccessible, dost still remain hidden here in our valley of tears under the white semblance of the host. . . . O Jesus, forgive me if I say that thy love reaches unto folly. . . . And in face of such folly, what wilt thou but that my heart leap up to thee? Could my confidence know any bounds?"

"I beseech thee, let thy divine eyes rest upon a vast number of little souls. I beseech thee to choose in this world a host of little victims worthy of thy love."

With this appeal Sœur Thérèse ends the "memorial" she had dedicated to her eldest sister. The saint's prayer has now been answered beyond all expectations, for the fervent souls who, in Carmel and other convents, have followed her example and have offered themselves as victims to the divine love, are legion, and their number will go on increasing without end.

3. The primary necessity of prayer.

The whole of the last chapter of the autobiography might aptly be summed up in an essential proposition quoted by Sœur Thérèse in the course of her book: "The least act of pure love is of greater value to the Church than all other works put together." This bold statement is taken from the *Spiritual Canticle* of St. John of the Cross. We already know how much the saint owes to this great doctor of mystical

theology. There can be no doubt but that throughout this eleventh chapter she was inspired by stanzas twenty-eight and twenty-nine of the *Spiritual Canticle*. We can see, too, by her poems that she had meditated deeply upon these stanzas. The following lines of stanza twenty-eight she knew by heart:

> My soul is occupied,
> And all my substance is in his service;
> Now I guard no flock,
> Nor have I any other employment:
> My sole occupation is love.

We shall understand better in what sense Sœur Thérèse preferred love to active works if we read through the commentary which belongs to this stanza. The little saint's whole life is a magnificent justification of St John of the Cross' teaching. The great doctor of mystical theology wrote:

"When the soul in any degree possesses the spirit of solitary love, we must not interfere with it. We should inflict a grievous wrong upon it, and upon the Church also if we were to occupy it, were it only for a moment, in exterior or active duties, whatever their importance. When God himself adjures all not to waken her from her love, who shall venture to do so without blame? In a word, it is for this love that we are all created. Let those men of zeal, who think by their preaching and exterior works to conquer the world, consider that they would be much more edifying to the Church, and more pleasing unto God—setting aside the good example they would give—if they would spend at least one half their time in prayer, even though they may not have attained

to the state of unitive love. Certainly they would do more, and with less trouble by one single good work than by a thousand, because of the merit of their prayer, and the spiritual strength of their supplies. To act otherwise is to beat the air, to do little more than nothing, sometimes nothing, and occasionally even mischief; for God may give up such persons to vanity, so that they may seem to have done something, when in reality their outward occupations bear no fruit, for it is quite certain that good works cannot be done except in the power of God."

That the canonization of Sœur Thérèse de l'Enfant-Jésus is a signal illustration of this spiritual doctrine is surely beyond all doubt. Is it not evident that "they would have inflicted a grievous wrong upon the little saint, and upon the Church also, if they had occupied her, were it only for a moment, in exterior or active duties?" Is it not also evident that "she did more . . . by one single good work than by a thousand, because of the merit of her prayer, and the spiritual strength of her supplies?" If we are not mistaken, the first and the greatest, the most precious lesson the autobiography of Sœur Thérèse affords us is the sovereign efficacy of a good work, a single good work, when it is the faithful expression of an interior life utterly detached from this world's goods and wholly given to prayer, to the love of God and of its neighbour. All those who, in the words of St John of the Cross, "think by their preaching and exterior works to convert the world" should

reflect upon this signal and most opportune lesson which Sœur Thérèse's glorification has given to an age of restlessness. To render any real service to the Church, we must set aside a considerable part of our time for prayer.

St John of the Cross, with supernatural confidence, did not shrink from using expressions calculated to make us tremble. "To act otherwise is to beat the air, to do little more than nothing, sometimes nothing, and occasionally even mischief." The saint had doubtless come across people without any real spiritual life, and who, although still under the sway of ambition, of desire, of the vanities of this world, were nevertheless convinced that they would conquer the world by exterior works of every description, and who in reality did little more than nothing. So true is it that the same essential tendencies and the same fundamental illusions recur in every age.

Dom Chautard not long ago asked how it was that although the past fifty years have witnessed the rise and development of charitable activities beyond number, "despite apparently splendid results, we have not been able to form a majority sufficiently Catholic at heart to fight against unbelief." And he pointed out as the main reason the fact that, for want of deep interior life, priests and teachers have only succeeded in producing souls of surface piety, without strong convictions or forceful ideals. "As professors, have

we not been more anxious to obtain success in examinations and to win fame for the school rather than to give souls solid religious instruction . . . ? And is not the mediocrity of character often due to the banality of our interior life?"[1]

Remarks of this kind, which could easily be multiplied, clearly prove that we ought to effect a wise, patient, and discreet reform of our apostolic and charitable works. One of the most widespread and pernicious errors is to imagine that the merit of our life is proportionate to our labours and our activity. In reality, the merit of our life and the efficacy of our apostolate is proportionate not to the amount of trouble we take, but to our holiness. If we remain impatient, and set too great a store by the world, if our minds wander when we are at prayer, and we cannot recollect ourselves or pray, then we may be sure that, "despite apparently splendid results," we do not exercise any deep or lasting religious influence. *Ambulavimus vias difficiles, viam autem Domini ignoravimus* (*We have walked through hard ways, but the ways of the Lord we have not known*).

We have now reached the central point of our study of St Teresa of the Child Jesus; it is therefore not surprising that we should encounter the central principle, the heart, as it were, of her influence and her mission. She wanted to be a

[1] *L'Ame de tout Apostolat.* Téqui, Paris

saint and she did not want to do it by halves. She entered the convent at the age of fifteen; she might after the fervour of her first few years, after the noviceship, have grown remiss and have been less strict with herself. But Sœur Thérèse was generous, mediocrity would never content her. As a tiny child, when her sister Léonie offered her some ribbons in a basket to choose from, Thérèse with a large and magnanimous gesture had carried them all off.

"This childish incident was a summary, so to speak, of my whole life. Later, when the way of perfection opened out before me, I realized that in order to become a saint one must suffer much, always seek what is most perfect, and forget oneself. I also understood that there are many degrees of holiness, that each soul is free to respond to the calls of our Lord, to do much or little for his love; in a word, to choose among the sacrifices he asks. And then also, as in my childhood's days, I cried out: 'My God, I choose it all, I will not be a saint by halves, I am not afraid of suffering for thee, I only fear one thing, and that is to do my own will. Accept the offering of my will, for I choose all that thou willest.'"

A single soul who really sanctifies herself and attains, like Sœur Thérèse, to a high degree of perfection, does more good throughout the world by a single little good work, a single book, than indifferent souls by countless such good works. Unless apostolic works and sermons spring from a soul on fire with holiness, unless they are the outward expression of a life of sacrifice, of prayer, of union with God, despite all the stir they make and the trouble they cost, they are of

little avail. What a superfluity of books, of sermons, of good works we have at the present day! It would have been better if those who have worn themselves out in such activities had set aside a good part of their time for prayer. Prayer and mortification are a primary necessity; that is the conclusion which forces itself upon anyone who has any inkling of the secret of the influence acquired by St Teresa of the Child Jesus.

Then what ought we to do? Ought we to cease from all activity, to leave off preaching, writing, and doing spiritual and corporal works of mercy? Of course not. We must not set about the urgently needed reform of long-standing habits and faulty methods of apostolic work in so arbitrary a way. We should bear in mind that, according to St Thomas Aquinas, the most perfect form of religious life is that which combines both the contemplative and the active life in a harmonious synthesis. "As it is more perfect," writes St Thomas, "to enlighten others than to possess the light for oneself alone, so is it more perfect to impart the truths contemplated than to contemplate them only" (*Summa Theologica,* II-II, Q. clxxxviii, Art. 6). In another equally suggestive and important passage, the saint explains how a certain degree of the active life is no hindrance but rather a help to contemplation, because it appeases our natural appetites—that is to say, our irrepressible long-

ing to exercise our sensitive and mental faculties. A great many people require some exterior work to satisfy their need of activity, otherwise they fall a prey to unrest, to weariness of mind, and to general discontent.

We must, therefore, try to combine action and contemplation. When our good works are so numerous, our activity so feverish and multifarious, as to endanger our interior life, we may be quite sure that we are on the wrong tack, that we are being misled by appearances, and that, for all our pains, our labours for the apostolate are but feebly supernatural. It then becomes our primary and imperative duty, for our soul's salvation and the good of the Church, to restrain our too natural zeal, to lessen the number of our good works, and to devote a more considerable part of our time to prayer. If we would really benefit souls, we should, above all, endeavour, as Sœur Thérèse always did, to become saints.

PART II

HOLINESS AND HEROISM: THE THREE POSITIVE ANTINOMIES OR PARADOXES

FOREWORD

THE IMPORTANCE OF POSITIVE ANTINOMIES OR PARADOXES

PASCAL wrote: "I do not admire an excess of a virtue like valour unless I perceive at the same time an excess of the opposite virtue, as in Epaminondas, who had extreme valour and extreme benignity. For otherwise it would be, not an ascent, but a descent. Man does not prove his greatness by being at one extreme, but rather by touching both extremes at once and filling all the space between." St Thomas Aquinas wrote some articles in his *Summa* which experience daily confirms. In the last stanzas of the *Spiritual Canticle,* in stanzas thirty and thirty-one more particularly, St John of the Cross has finely spoken in mystical symbolism of the garland of heroic virtues which is the crown of sanctity: "It is not sufficient for the preservation of virtues that love be alone; it must also be strong, that no contrary vice may destroy the perfection of the garland; for the virtues are so bound up together in the soul by this hair of love that if this thread be once broken all the virtues are lost; for where one virtue is, all are, and where one fails, all fail also." By union with

God and love of her Lord the faithful soul binds together her virtues into a garland of flowers.

> We will make thee garlands
> Flowering in thy love.

And thus Christian virtues form a system; they make, so to speak, an aureole, the centre of which is charity, and the rays the gifts of the Holy Ghost. A saint does not possess a virtue as though it were a given point on the circumference of a circle, without our being able to point to the contrary or complementary virtue at a diametrically opposed extremity. And it is just this harmonious union of virtues and gifts, emanating from charity as from their centre, which constitutes sanctity. In order to measure the distance between the wings of an eagle, we have to stretch them out and mark the opposite extremities, and then we can estimate their power. So is it with the virtues of saints; their greatness can only be understood by setting one against the other. "Contrary truths," wrote Pascal again; "that is where we must begin; otherwise we understand nothing and everything is heretical, and even at the end of each truth one must add what one remembers of the opposite truth."

Always to remember, when treating of a truth or of a virtue, the opposite truth or virtue, is the essential rule of the integral method. For instance, a writer or preacher might represent

Sœur Thérèse de l'Enfant-Jésus as an angel of peace; indeed, it would not be difficult to gather more than one signal trait in her autobiography or in the canonization process showing how the saint sacrificed herself in order to keep the peace with her sisters and to maintain it in the noviciate and in the community. But if a writer or preacher were to insist exclusively on Sœur Thérèse's love of peace and concord without ever alluding to the existence in the saint of the contrary or complementary virtue and its importance, her ever-militant strength of soul, we should be justified in asserting that he had not fully defined his subject. In short, whenever a certain quality in Sœur Thérèse is spoken of without a hint that the contrary quality is being borne in mind, we can without prejudice have a legitimate doubt whether any attempt has been made to understand her harmonious yet complex sanctity.

Our readers will forgive us for insisting upon this thesis, so typical of St Thomas and of Pascal, of the necessary connection between contrary or complementary virtues. We make bold to say that if our readers would only accustom themselves always to look out for it in the saints, and particularly in Sœur Thérèse, they would avoid biassed, shallow, and too facile ideas in their regard, which are both misleading and dangerous to boot. The most diverse virtues go in pairs. For instance, Christian

humility and magnanimity are two rings in a chain which pass through the centre of each other, and we cannot possibly discuss with any precision or circumscribe either of these virtues without encountering the other. Nor can we treat of the gift of fear without speaking of love, for, as St John of the Cross writes: "When a soul has perfectly attained to the spirit of fear she also perfectly possesses the spirit of love. The perfect fear of the child proceeds from the love it has for its father." If, when discoursing on any particular virtue in Sœur Thérèse de l'Enfant-Jésus, the opposite virtue is not also brought out, it is a sign that her sanctity has only partially been understood. It is part of the very essence of Christian humility to be great-souled and to be above petty feelings. So that one could never fathom Sœur Thérèse's humility without coming up against her magnanimity and greatness of soul.

The most striking aspect of Sœur Thérèse's sanctity was its balance, the stable and harmonious equilibrium of all the virtues. One of her confessors who knew her best declared: "I never noticed anything rash or unadvised in her, no sign of any natural exaggeration or impulsiveness. In all her utterances, and even in the expression of her face, there was a wonderful balance." The saint's eldest sister confirms this testimony word for word: "Sœur Thérèse de l'Enfant-Jésus was in every respect so well

balanced that her poise seemed to me natural to her. She never overdid anything." There can be no other reason for such perfect poise, except the fact that in her the most opposite virtues counterbalanced one another. For equilibrium cannot exist except when two opposing forces counterpoise each other. In order, therefore, rightly to understand the poise of Sœur Thérèse's sanctity, there is no better way than to study, two by two, the virtues which constitute and complete it.

An antinomy, or paradox, is the name we give to the opposition of two virtues or truths which, even to the names by which they are known, appear to be incompatible. For instance, littleness and greatness, the virtues of youth and those of old age, childhood and experience, weakness and strength are antinomic qualities. But in reality these antinomies are only apparently and humanly speaking incompatible. Supernaturally they are reconciled in a higher synthesis. We cannot study in pairs all the antinomic virtues which make up the whole of Sœur Thérèse's sanctity. We shall confine ourselves to examining three of the most important of the positive antinomies. We note, in fact, in Sœur Thérèse de l'Enfant-Jésus (1) the ingenuous simplicity of a child joined to the consummate prudence of maturity, (2) deep humility joined to sublime magnanimity, (3) deep and evident joy joined to cruel physical and mental

sufferings. We shall see that these three antinomies are reconciled in the supernatural gifts of wisdom and fortitude, and in the highest of the theological virtues—namely, divine charity.

CHAPTER I

THE FIRST POSITIVE PARADOX: SIMPLICITY AND PRUDENCE—THE GIFT OF WISDOM

"*Estote prudentes sicut serpentes et simplices sicut columbae.*"—MATT. x, 16.

1. *Childhood and maturity.*

SŒUR THÉRÈSE DE L'ENFANT-JÉSUS, who excelled at making her own the qualities and even the language of childhood, said one day to her sisters, who rightly showed anxiety about her serious illness: "Let God play the part of Papa; he knows what is best for baby." Her eldest sister, Sœur Marie du Sacré-Cœur, asked her: "Are you a baby?" Sœur Thérèse looked serious and said: "Yes—but a very wise baby! A baby who is an old man." "Never did I perceive better than at that moment," says Sœur Marie du Sacré-Cœur, "how much virility her Way of Childhood concealed, and I thought it most fitting that in her manuscript she should have appropriated that saying of the prophet David: *I am young* (and yet) . . . *I have had understanding above ancients.*"

The story of this episode contains, as our readers have doubtless noticed, a bold paradox uttered by Sœur Thérèse herself. It would seem, indeed, that the saint had chosen the diametrically

opposite terms of human life on purpose to combine them. "A baby who is an old man."[1] And her sister, in her turn, uses a contradictory expression when she says that she had never better understood how much virility the Way of Childhood concealed. Virility is, then, inherent in the Way of Childhood. That Way of Childhood should show the quality of maturity and even of old age, beside those of early youth. How are we to reconcile such contraries and such a paradox?

If we read carefully through Pope Benedict XV's discourse on the heroism of Sœur Thérèse's virtues, a discourse which expressly treats of the Way of Spiritual Childhood, the same contradictory and paradoxical expressions will obtrude themselves. The Sovereign Pontiff warns us that we must acquire a proper notion of spiritual childhood. It is chiefly composed of "confidence in God and blind surrender to him." It debars all pride or presumption; it presupposes a lively faith in the existence of God and confident recourse to his divine providence. These are simply the qualities of childhood and agree quite naturally together. But as soon as Benedict XV begins to treat of Sœur Thérèse's virtues, at once the qualities of maturity, of

[1] We should note that Nicodemus laid the same paradox before our Lord, but he inverted the order of the terms; instead of asking how a child could be a man, he said: "How can a man become a child again: *Quomodo potest homo nasci, cum sit senex?*"

virility, of old age, become evident. The Pope writes that from her earliest years she showed "a child's freedom from care and its gay vivacity, together with great seriousness and an extraordinary maturity, and that even then Thérèse in her words and actions evinced a judgement far above her age."

More recently Pope Pius XI said: "From the depths of her cloister she shows us an example of holiness which everyone can and ought to follow. She wants to draw people into her little way, she teaches us that childlike simplicity which is childlike only in name." If this childlike simplicity "which is inseparable from real strength of soul is childlike only in name," surely it must be complex and mysterious, and we must take heed lest we misunderstand it.

But Sœur Thérèse herself took care to warn us that "we must carefully avoid measuring experience by length of years." In the most deliberate portion of her autobiography, addressed to the Prioress, Mère Marie de Gonzague, she wrote:

"On this earth it is rare indeed to find souls who do not measure God's omnipotence by their own narrow thoughts. The world is quite ready to admit exceptions everywhere here below. God alone is denied this liberty. It has long been the custom among men to reckon experience by age, for in his youth the holy King David sang to the Lord: *I am very young and despised,* but in the same psalm he does not fear to say: *I have had understanding above ancients.*"

The world as a rule estimates spiritual qualities in a very quantitative and material fashion; and of a truth it is far easier and quicker to do so. Someone is sixty years old, consequently he is very experienced; someone else is forty, thirty, twenty years old; consequently he is so much the less experienced. Yet how misleading is this reasoning in practice, mathematical and precise though it be in theory! How very rarely we come across old men who are really experienced! True experience is reckoned not so much by length of years as by the depth and continuance of the reflection and observation made with regard to self or other people. A man who has never corrected his faults, nor gained any knowledge of himself through humility, from the spiritual view-point is nothing more than a great unreasoning child. But because she had continually mortified her least desires, and had observed them both in herself and her novices; because, in short, she had sanctified herself, Sœur Thérèse de l'Enfant-Jésus had accumulated, in less than twenty years, very great experience. Such is the result acquired by an ever-watchful conscience which takes toll of itself after every trial. There is a very great deal of experience contained in the simple reflection we have already quoted, and now repeat, because it shows a knowledge of human nature worthy of Pascal: "Oh, it is high time our Lord took me away from the world's poisoned

atmosphere. For none of us can boast that we are stronger than our neighbours, and where others have been lost, I myself might be lost." These words might have been written by a moralist of sixty, about to leave this world after a disillusioning experience of all human ties. But at fifteen Thérèse had caught a passing glimpse of the abyss; she saw its entrancing perspective, but she sounded its dizzy depths at a glance. We have here a typical example of the truth that a humble and vigilant soul is able to acquire in a moment more experience on some points than people who are too self-confident would in many years of only half-conscious existence.

This enables us to understand how it is that experience is the immediate fruit of the Way of Spiritual Childhood. As soon as a soul begins to humble itself and to practise that asceticism of littleness, that mortification in the smallest trifles of which we have spoken, in a few months it is bound to acquire a true, definite, and keen insight into the concupiscence, vanity, jealousy, the craving for honours, and the love of riches which ceaselessly and secretly torment us. One who is too deeply involved in external activities, who does not keep a vigilant watch over self, or who is proud and vain, will always be the unconscious dupe of his violent or crafty instincts. Even though he lived to be eighty he would never acquire any spiritual or moral experience.

We hasten to add that in humble prayer before the tabernacle rays of supernatural light often light up the concupiscences of our fallen nature to its very darkest depths.

The Way of Spiritual Childhood therefore, involving as it does humility, mortification, and prayer, produces consummate prudence. The disciple of Sœur Thérèse will acquire *understanding above the ancients*. It is, then, an evident conclusion that a childhood thus endowed with experience could never be a natural, sensible, and human childhood. There is, in the words of Pope Pius XI, nothing childlike about it but the name. Here is a remark which should arrest the attention of the little souls who hope to imitate little Sœur Thérèse. Mère Agnès de Jésus, to whom the saint on her deathbed had confided the sacred treasure of her doctrine, gives us some valuable instruction on this point. After having warned us that the piety Sœur Thérèse preached was not "a mawkish, puerile, or childish sort of piety, as has sometimes been asserted," she adds these words of primary importance:

"Sœur Thérèse did not use the term 'child' in the strict sense of the word. Speaking of the Holy Innocents, she herself disclosed her ideas on this subject: 'The Holy Innocents,' she said, 'are not children in heaven: they have only the undefinable charm of childhood. They are represented as children, because we have need of images to make invisible things comprehensible to us.' And so, when the Servant of God, in speaking

of her spiritual life, uses terms proper to childhood, it is simply by way of comparison, in order better to express her thought."

The last statement tells us in so many words that in treating of childhood from a spiritual view-point the terms of human speech are used only by analogy. We do not need to be great scholars in order to understand the great part analogy plays in theology and mysticism. And without any thought of attempting a lengthy classical exposition of the question, we may be allowed to point out some elementary rules of the analogical method as applied to the Way of Spiritual Childhood.

2. Elementary rules of the analogical method.

In order to transpose the notion of childhood from the natural into the spiritual order, we must first eliminate anything which in childhood as it is met with in nature, in daily life, constitutes an imperfection. This first rule, or means, of the analogical method is the *via remotionis,* the way of exclusion. As mothers know only too well, natural childhood has many unfortunate defects along with its more precious qualities. Original sin is but too evident under many forms in children's souls and bodies—vanity, jealousy, impatience, anger, waywardness, obstinacy. And even among the best, who seem not to have sinned in Adam, we are still bound to admit irresponsibility, ignorance, thoughtlessness, lack of self-control, all imperfections inherent in natural childhood. It is evident that such fail-

ings cannot enter into the conception of spiritual childhood. The Way of Spiritual Childhood, it behoves us to note, utterly and entirely excludes any of the defects of childhood—any childishness, in fact. It follows that those who adopt St Teresa of the Child Jesus' spirituality must carefully avoid all childish puerility. These will be eliminated by the first rule of the analogical method, the *via remotionis*.

But when we transpose the notion of childhood from the natural to the supernatural order, after having eliminated all failings and imperfections, we must raise its qualities to their highest value —to excellence. This is the second rule of the analogical method, the *via excellentiae*. What are the qualities of childhood? Pope Benedict XV, in a general way, pointed them out when he wrote:

> "Watch a child who is not yet quite firm on its feet and has not as yet the use of speech. If it is chased by another child of its own age, or threatened by a bigger child, or if it is frightened by the sudden appearance on the scene of some animal, whither does it run for refuge? Where does it take shelter? In its mother's arms. . . . And when she welcomes it and clasps it to her heart, it forgets its fears, and heaves a sigh of which its little lungs hardly seemed capable, then full of courage looks at the cause of its distress and fear. . . . In the same way does spiritual childhood consist in confidence in God and blind surrender into his hands. . . ."

According to Benedict XV, therefore, the dominant quality of spiritual childhood is mis-

trust of self, together with entire confidence in God's infinite goodness. And this is just what Sœur Thérèse meant when she wrote: "Our Lord is pleased to show me the only path which leads to this divine furnace; and the path is the self-surrender of a little child sleeping, without a fear, in its father's arms."

Among the texts which Sœur Thérèse quoted as the foundations of her doctrine, the most essential, no doubt, is the one which is taken from the famous scene in the Gospels, when our Lord forbade his disciples to send the children away: *Suffer the little children, and forbid them not to come unto me: for the kingdom of heaven is for such.* St John Chrysostom, in a well-known homily, tells us of some other qualities of childhood which Pope Benedict XV does not mention. "A child," he writes, "bears no resentment towards those who have vexed him, but goes to them as to his friends . . . and, however much he be beaten by his mother, after her he seeks, and doth prefer her to all. Though thou show him a queen with her diadem, he prefers her not to his mother clad in rags, but would choose rather to see her in these than the queen in her splendour. For he useth to distinguish what pertains to him and what is strange to him, not by its poverty and wealth, but by friendship. And nothing more than necessary things doth he seek, but just to be satisfied from the breast, and then he leaves

sucking. The young child is not grieved at what we are grieved at, as at loss of money and such things as that, and he doth not rejoice again at what we rejoice at—namely, these temporal things—he is not eager about the beauty of persons. Therefore Christ said: *Of such is the kingdom of heaven.*"

When we sum up the qualities of childhood, the principal ones to be noted are acknowledgement of weakness, confidence in parents, and entire faith in their word, spontaneous simplicity which does not disguise the truth, indifference to sensible attractions, and, lastly, contempt for all earthly honours and wealth. And we who are by grace the children of God, and call God our Father, we must push these virtues to the point of excellence in the spiritual order. Our confidence in the mercy and the might of our Father in heaven ought to be unbounded, and our faith in his commandments and revelation unconditional. We ought to be utterly detached from all earthly honours, and to have great love of truth and of God.

Sœur Thérèse de l'Enfant Jésus showed her childlike faith, and love, and simplicity when she spoke of God the Father as "Papa." In so doing she was simply giving a literal translation of St Paul's words: *'Abba, Pater.* The infinite perfection of God the Father is the very reason why in the spiritual order the qualities of childhood should be carried to their highest

term, in accordance with the second rule of the analogical method—*via excellentiae*.

St John Chrysostom, in the homily on the virtues of childhood which we have already quoted, says again : "To be simple with understanding; this is angelic life (*haec est vita angelica*)." Whenever any virtue is lifted up to heaven by the way of excellence it necessarily enters into the constellation of all the supernatural virtues. Thus we come back to our first proposition, and we note that the way of excellence ends in the connection of virtues, the *via connexionis*. For we must know that if a natural quality such as pity, or mercy, or a certain kindliness, can, according to St Thomas Aquinas, exist separately, or at least apart from other virtues such as fortitude or justice, as soon as that quality is supernaturalized it presupposes them. When one is virtuous in too natural a manner one has all the defects of one's qualities; but when one is supernaturally virtuous these defects disappear and the complementary qualities take their place. A naturally good-natured person has the defect of this quality, which is weakness; if he becomes supernaturally good-natured the defect disappears and fortitude takes its place. In order fully to grasp the Way of Spiritual Childhood in its entirety, one must therefore first exclude all the defects of natural childhood, then carry its qualities to the pitch of excellence, and, lastly, join to them their complementary virtues

by the *via connexionis*. Then only will one attain to the "height of wisdom."[1]

3. Childlike simplicity and consummate prudence.

We should have to read through the autobiography again in order to realize that Sœur Thérèse observed all the virtues with the utmost prudence, but under a general aspect of simplicity. There are, however, plenty of particular instances which show us how, of set purpose, she practised a childlike simplicity. We know that frankness often produces *enfants terribles*. But Sœur Thérèse, without being an *enfant terrible,* was always frank and sincere. When yet a child she one day read a book in which a schoolmistress was commended because she knew how to keep on good terms with everybody. To one she would say, "You are quite right"; to another, "You are not wrong." The duplicity of such diplomacy instinctively jarred on Sœur Thérèse's childish honesty. "But that is very wrong," cried the little girl; "one ought to say just what one thinks." In later years, when reminding Mère Agnès de Jésus of this little incident, Sœur Thérèse owned: "I am still of the same opinion, and I always deal so with the novices. Of course, I find it difficult, because it is so much easier to throw the blame on the absent. I do just the contrary. It is my duty to

[1] This third means is not as a rule mentioned by theologians, because it results from the very object of mystical theology, the virtues and the gifts being necessarily connected; we mention it here, as we are writing for readers who are not theologians.

tell the truth to those who are entrusted to me, and I do it." How many troubles would be avoided if simple candour were only practised among Catholics, even among religious! Here is an instance in which Sœur Thérèse, towards the end of her life, decisively affirmed that frank simplicity ought always to be one of the attributes of the Way of Spiritual Childhood:

"At the end of her life," says Mère Agnès de Jésus, "I asked her to say a few edifying words to the doctor who was attending her. She answered: 'Mother, that is not my way of doing things; the doctor must think what he likes, I care only for simplicity and cannot bear anything else. I tell you that to do what you ask would be wrong on my part.' On July 9, 1897, the Superior of the Carmel came to see if it was time to give her Extreme Unction. He thought she was not ill enough, so smiling and cheerful had she managed to appear. I afterwards remarked to her that she did not know how to get what she wanted out of the Superior. She neatly responded: 'That's an art I have never acquired.'"

Not for anything in the world would Sœur Thérèse de l'Enfant-Jésus have consented to hide what she thought, or even to have shown any outward signs of an illness that was only too real. She not only aimed at keeping the simplicity of childhood; she meant that simplicity to be gracious to boot. Whence her entire surrender to the goodness and might of the Father who is in heaven. As soon as she encountered any difficulty "she at once threw herself into God's arms, like the little children who, when possessed

by fear, hide their fair heads against their father's shoulder." But what heroism and abnegation this simple self-surrender demands! We are about to quote a passage from the autobiography, which, for all its apparent childishness, is in reality magnanimous in its resignation, so true is it that the most diverse virtues are, as it were, unified in the Way of Childhood. We know, moreover, that this simple passage has been a great support to other afflicted souls who have taken Sœur Thérèse for their model. She was in Rome after her unsuccessful appeal to the Holy Father. She wrote:

"Some time before this took place, I had offered myself to the Child Jesus to be his little plaything. I told him not to treat me like one of those precious toys which children only look at and dare not touch, but to treat me like a little ball of no value, that could be thrown on the ground, kicked about, pricked, left in a corner, or pressed to his heart just as it might please him. In fact, I wanted to amuse the holy Child and to let him play with me as he fancied. Here indeed he was answering my prayer. In Rome Jesus pricked his little toy . . . perhaps he wanted to see what was inside . . . and when satisfied, he let it drop and went to sleep. What was he doing during his sweet slumber, and what became of the ball thus cast on one side? He dreamed that he was still at play, that he took it up or threw it down, that he rolled it far away, but at last he pressed it to his heart, nor did he allow it again to slip from his tiny hand."

There are many such tokens to be gathered from the life of Sœur Thérèse de l'Enfant-Jésus.

Of course, she had the youthfulness, the gracious ingenuousness of the children of God. She always retained a certain charming childlike grace. Though rather above the average in height, her sisters in the convent were wont to call her their little Sœur Thérèse, as one does people of a youthful character. And before we attribute puerility to the saint as a matter of course, we shall do well not to overlook her opposite qualities, and carefully to consider how great prudence was, by a striking contrast, evinced in her soul. "From her earliest years," her own sisters tell us, "we heard her say things which proved how thoughtful and demure she was." And later, when at the age of twenty she was entrusted with the spiritual direction of the novices under the most delicate circumstances (her sister, Mère Agnès de Jésus, being Prioress and Mère Marie de Gonzague mistress of novices), the saint behaved with consummate prudence. This is the reason why, from the beginning of her religious life, she was considered to have unerring judgement and to be supernaturally inspired. "She was a child in years only; if they wanted advice, it was to her, the youngest, that her sisters turned."

Several witnesses of the highest authority agree in asserting that Sœur Thérèse was even at that age deemed capable of exercising the most important of all functions—that of Prioress. "She would have been able," says Mère Marie des

Anges, the former novice mistress, "to fill any office in the community, even that of Prioress. . . . When in her turn she was entrusted with the noviciate, she fulfilled her duties like an experienced nun, although she was only given the position of an aid." Here is another most interesting piece of evidence, which is not without a touch of piquancy. It is from the pen of Canon Domin, chaplain to the Benedictine Dames, who taught little Thérèse her Catechism, and used to call her his "little doctor." Worldly or unbelieving writers who are fond of imagining that priests "cultivate mystics in conventual hothouses," as they put it, may convince themselves, by a close study of St Teresa of the Child Jesus' life, that as a rule directors are anything but "astute wire-pullers." Nearly all the priests whom Sœur Thérèse consulted showed themselves suspicious both of her precocious vocation and of her new doctrine, the Way of Spiritual Childhood.

"I remember," says Canon Domin, "that the idea that people were flattering and adulating the Servant of God, pursued me even after her entrance into Carmel. The chaplain of the Carmel at that date, the Abbé Youf, used also to talk to me sometimes about Sœur Thérèse's extraordinary qualities. He told me in so many words: 'Although she is so young, if the community wanted a Prioress, she could be nominated without the slightest fear." These words of my confrère seemed to me to be bluff, as they say in English, and consequently I never went to see her in Carmel. Alas, it was I who was in

the wrong, by not believing in her extraordinary virtue, as I now admit.' "

Canon Domin—and the confession does him credit—never admitted Sœur Thérèse's exceptional prudence until the beatification process was instituted. His mistrustful scepticism reminds us, somewhat distantly, of the Apostle Thomas, who only believed in the Resurrection after he had seen our Lord. In order to believe in the supernatural prudence of a young nun of twenty, one must either see it for oneself or have manifold and overwhelming evidence of it. At the very beginning of Sœur Thérèse's noviciate, Mère Marie de Gonzague wrote : " I never could have believed that a child of fifteen could possess so mature a judgement. There is no fault to be found with her; she is perfect."

This, surely, is an antinomy, a paradox. Can a child of fifteen be prudent and experienced? And, inversely, can an elderly person retain or acquire the qualities of childhood? Yet Sœur Thérèse asserted that it was possible to retain a childlike simplicity even in the most difficult offices, and that to an advanced age. At the end of her life the saint gave the wisest of counsels with disarming simplicity. " Sœur Thérèse de l'Enfant-Jésus," we are told, " was very direct as well as very prudent in the advice she gave people." Mère Agnès de Jésus, after she had been Prioress, several times received the confidences of another Sister who really needed

sympathy, simply out of compassion for her. When Sœur Thérèse's advice was sought she counselled her rather to refrain from doing so. She said: "It is an illusion to imagine that one can do good outside obedience, for not only does one do no good to the poor thing by listening to her, but one might even do her harm and lay oneself open to offending God." This advice is hall-marked with the most discerning prudence.

That prudence, notwithstanding the great simplicity under which the saint concealed it, was eventually appreciated, and that not only by the novices who did not even give Sœur Thérèse time to make her thanksgiving, so eager were they to draw upon her stock of wisdom, but also by the older nuns. They, too, though by stealth and in the dark, as it were, either because the old do not like seeking counsel of the young, or for some other reason, came to consult the young saint. "Her direction was very sure," says one of her novices; "she had an answer for everything. She never shrank from doing her duty, but she knew how to be gentle and compassionate when there was reason to be so. She could not bear people to attach any importance to trivial sufferings." Though they did not always own it, all the nuns liked her direction; it was neither fond nor flabby, and they sought it from a natural craving for truth. A few of the older nuns who wanted advice went to her by stealth, like Nicodemus, on the days when such visits

were allowed by the rule. And Sœur Thérèse, who was fond of quoting our Lord's words to the master in Israel, explained how they must be born again — *oportet renasci denuo*. For spiritual childhood is a second birth to another life, one that is supernatural and mystic. And it is by self-abnegation that we are born to the spiritual life, the life of efficacious grace and the gifts of the Holy Ghost. The saint had created a body of doctrine which, although quite traditional, was personal to herself; she was able to lay bare the inner meaning of the Gospel and to content all who came to her.

4. The gifts of the Holy Ghost; the gift of wisdom.

We have tried to show that the consummate prudence, premature experience, and sure, nay, almost infallible judgement, we observe in Sœur Thérèse might partly proceed from her unbounded mortification, her progress in the path of sanctity, her psychological intuition. But when we set over against that prudence her simplicity and ingenuousness, we realize that such explanations are inadequate, and that in the last analysis we must appeal to a supernatural gift—the gift of wisdom. After having confessed that, like David, she had had understanding above the ancients, Sœur Thérèse herself gives us the key to the mystery. "Our Lord is often pleased," she writes, "to give wisdom to the little ones." And Pope Pius XI, in his homily for the feast of the canonization, declared: "Accordingly it pleased the divine goodness to

endow and to enrich Sœur Thérèse with a gift of wisdom that was quite exceptional. . . . The Spirit of Truth showed and taught her what he generally hides from the wise and the prudent, and reveals to the humble."

The apparent contradiction or paradox we noted in Sœur Thérèse between her childlike simplicity and the consummate prudence of experience—qualities which as a rule are mutually exclusive to the point of apparent incompatibility —is a paradox which in the end can only be explained by the supernatural gift of wisdom.

We must not think that the gift of wisdom, or, indeed, any of the gifts of the Holy Ghost, are, strictly speaking, the result of human efforts, of study or exercise. Of course, meritorious efforts can to a certain extent prepare the soul to receive these supernatural gifts. But they are of quite another order than virtues, which are acquired by the repetition of certain acts. The gifts of the Holy Ghost can to some extent be compared to those of genius. And genius of any kind is not acquired by methods or exercises. The gift of speech, the genius of eloquence, is not the result of patient labour, whatever one may say; the same is true of poetry, literature, and the arts. Pascal was well aware of this, and on this point was entirely opposed to the Cartesian system of thought, which trusted wholly to rational and volitional methods. He therefore wrote: "True eloquence cares naught for eloquence." *A for-*

tiori, the gifts of the Holy Ghost are not acquired, but infused. It was not mainly owing to her asceticism, her knowledge of self and of others that St Teresa of the Child Jesus had acquired wisdom at the age of fifteen; in her case it was the wholly gratuitous gift of the Holy Ghost.

According to St Thomas Aquinas, there is yet another difference between the gifts of the Holy Ghost and the virtues. Not only are they gratuitous in origin, and come from on high, and can be given suddenly, as to the Apostles on the day of Pentecost; but in their exercise they are not subject to the slow working, the scrutiny or deductions of the reason, the laborious efforts of our will; they work immediately and with facility. Aristotle, who follows Plato in this, had already remarked that the action of genius is not directed by reason, but by some higher intuition which he called an inner instinct. We have emphasized a feature in Sœur Thérèse—namely, that wholly intuitive as she was, she was not guided by any rational methods nor by mathematical rules. She acted upon her genius and by supernatural gifts; she accomplished wonders with the utmost ease. Without making any plan, and without finding out the rules and methods of literary composition, she wrote a book which was a masterpiece. Unbelievers call it a plagiarism and say that someone must have guided her pen. A very brief examination

suffices to show that these suppositions are quite inconsistent; they vanish as soon as the lead is cast. Sœur Thérèse was an inspired soul of genius. She did the same in her poetry and painting: by a stroke of genius which verged upon the miraculous she set to work to paint a large picture for the convent oratory, without any preliminary training. Sœur Geneviève, her sister Céline, who was herself very artistic and a competent judge in the matter, said:

"I have always looked upon it as an entirely supernatural grace that she was able to paint, without ever having learnt how, a picture on the oratory wall composed of a group of little angels, each with his proper attribute. The work, which had to be carried out in a place so dark that an expert would scarcely have succeeded, is not a copy, but an original composition, which is utterly disarming."

It is the mark of genius, assisted by grace, to carry out marvellous enterprises without the help of, and even against, the rules of reason. This was how Joan of Arc won her victories. Voltaire and Anatole France say that she was guided by military leaders and the king's counsellors. But on examination this theory completely collapses. Joan of Arc, like Sœur Thérèse, was ordered by higher gifts. And although all the saints possess the moral and the infused virtues, and the gifts of the Holy Ghost, yet because they are so different, and have inherited a different temperament and education, some will have recourse to

the moral or theological virtues, and others to the gifts of the Holy Ghost. Those who feel more drawn to subject their actions to the guidance of reason, to the rational and volitional method, will prefer to exercise the virtues, whereas those who are more intuitive than rational will act rather under the impulse of the gifts. For, according to St Thomas' teaching, the virtues make us more apt to be guided by reason, and in this sense make us more reasonable, whereas the gifts dispose us to be moved by some supernatural inspiration or divine instinct. It would seem, for instance, that St Ignatius Loyola, in his method of meditation and prayer, gives the greater share to reason, whereas Sœur Thérèse, who reasoned but little, acted by inspiration. To borrow Pascal's terminology, we might say that by her humiliations she laid herself open to inspirations. Knowing her childlike helplessness, she expected everything from the Holy Ghost. She wrote:

"I have often noticed that our Lord will not give me a stock of provisions. He feeds me every moment with fresh nourishment, which I find within me without knowing how it got there. In all simplicity, I believe it is our Lord himself, hidden in the depths of my poor heart, and in some mysterious way working within me, and inspiring me to do all that he wills at the moment."

Since the seventeenth century, and the progress made by Cartesian philosophy and the scientific spirit, people may have been inclined

to subject the phenomena of the mystical life somewhat too much to the rules of the rational method. The result was a certain forgetfulness of the gifts of the Holy Ghost. People thought only of the moral and theological virtues, and of extraordinary mystical graces. The theological doctrine of the gifts of the Holy Ghost, although so practical, had been neglected to such an extent that people said it had no longer any but "an historical interest." A reaction was necessary, and the all too forsaken doctrine of the supernatural gifts, differing from the virtues by their mode of operation, had to be rediscovered. Now, it is evident that St Teresa of the Child Jesus, while she freely renounced all ecstasies, visions, and extraordinary graces properly so called, was, on the other hand, guided in her mystical life by the gifts of the Holy Ghost. This is yet another characteristic of her spirituality which makes the saint singularly up to date. And in this connection we should note that she had prepared with quite exceptional care to receive the sacrament of Confirmation. She was astonished at the small store people seemed sometimes to set by this sacrament. "I could not understand," she wrote, "anyone not preparing with the greatest care for this sacrament of love." Owing to some delay, her preparatory retreat was lengthened. Thérèse thanked God for it and redoubled her fervour. In the canonization process we note this sig-

nificant piece of evidence, which affords food for thought:

"During the lesser retreat before her confirmation, she showed much application in studying the gifts of the Holy Ghost. From that time onward she rarely used a book for prayer. Her prayer was wholly interior and appeared to be contemplative."

So that it was the infused gifts of the Holy Ghost which made Thérèse a contemplative, which instinctively taught her to pray, and delivered her from the fine formulas she found in her books of devotion. Moreover, one of her sisters, Céline, assures us that her preparation for the sacrament of Confirmation had brought about an altogether extraordinary inpouring of fervour in her soul.

"The few days which preceded her confirmation on June 14, 1884, left a very strong impression on my memory. Thérèse, who was usually so calm, was not the same person: a sort of enthusiasm or holy inebriation was apparent in her outward bearing. One day during her retreat, I told her how surprised I was to find her in such dispositions. She explained to me what she understood by the virtue of this sacrament, the taking possession of her whole being by the spirit of love. There was such warmth in her words, such fire in her look, that I was myself imbued with a supernatural feeling, and left her deeply moved. The incident made such an impression on my mind that I can even now see her gesture, her attitude, the place where she was sitting; the remembrance of it will never fade from my mind."

The saint herself noted down the day of her Confirmation among the most memorable dates

of her interior life. Père Madelaine, a Premonstratensian abbot, and one of her confessors, very justly remarked: "Thenceforward everything made her want to pray—the sight of a flower, the loveliness of the created world of nature. She had a truly remarkable facility for prayer. It was a supernatural gift." The case could not be better put. That supernatural instinct which acts spontaneously, without effort or premeditation, and makes the soul pray and meditate as naturally as bees make honey and birds their nests, is just that gift of the Holy Ghost, the gift of piety. Sœur Thérèse tells us, moreover, in her autobiography, that in the sacrament of Confirmation she had received the gift of fortitude: "On that day I received the gift of fortitude in suffering—a gift I sorely needed, for the martyrdom of my soul was soon to begin."

We will treat of the gift of fortitude in the next chapter. We have been obliged to make a digression on the nature and the importance of the gifts of the Holy Spirit in Sœur Thérèse's spiritual life, and consequently we revert, in her Way of Childhood, to the gift of wisdom, which alone can explain how it was that the saint so spontaneously combined the simplicity of childhood with the prudence of old age.

The gift of wisdom, like the other gifts, does not subject the contemplative soul to reason; on the contrary, it emancipates it and puts it into

direct communication with the Holy Ghost, enabling it intuitively to discern dangerous illusions at once, and to recognize the true way as by some special sense. It is the gift of wisdom, that kind of divine instinct, which explains how it was that she could, notwithstanding her youthfulness, give such sure and valuable advice to her novices, to the older nuns, and even to the Prioress. When she authoritatively stated to Mère Agnès, "Believe me, Mother, never embark upon the path of extraordinary mortifications, but beware of it, for it is not that of little souls like ours," Sœur Thérèse felt that she was inspired by the gift of wisdom. So, too, when she urged the necessity for great discretion in any correspondence by letter between nuns and young priests, the little nun showed that she was indeed a "wise child" through the grace of that wisdom which is from above.

"Every one of us," she used to say, "would, I am sure, write just what I have written, and would receive equal praise and confidence. But only by prayer and sacrifice can we do anything for the Church. Correspondence should be strictly limited, and it should be altogether forbidden to any nuns who might tend to become absorbed in it, thinking they were doing wonders, whereas in reality they were only harming their own souls and falling into the devil's most insidious snares."

(Sœur Thérèse knew without being told that the human heart sometimes becomes attached under false pretences to people a long way off, even unknown, whom the imagination idealizes all the more, and this is why she used to dwell upon the point.)

"Mother, what I have just told you is very important; I beg of you not to forget it in after years. In Carmel we must not coin bad money to buy souls withal. . . . And very often the fine words we pen and the fine words we receive in return are nothing but an exchange of counterfeit coin."

If the saint spoke with all the authority of a foundress, it is because she felt urged to do so by the Spirit of God, and because she knew she was inspired by the gift of wisdom. Besides, was she not, strictly speaking, a spiritual foundress? Had she not created a doctrine, that Way of Spiritual Childhood, the essential outlines of which she had traced in the last chapters of her book? As the Holy Father recently reminded us, "owing to a quite exceptional gift of wisdom, the Spirit of Truth taught and disclosed to her what is as a rule hidden from the wise and prudent and revealed to the humble. She acquired, indeed, such knowledge of supernatural things that she was able to mark out for others a sure way of salvation."

5. Neither quietism nor illuminism

We want to forestall a misunderstanding which might have pernicious consequences. It has been admitted that the gifts of the Holy Ghost, and the gift of wisdom in particular, are freely bestowed, and that they make us act spontaneously through a divine impulse and inspiration. But we must not on any account conclude from this that they dispense us from all labour, inquiry, or trial. Genius is not the result of work,

but it supposes it. And so it is in the supernatural order. It was, in truth, as Benedict XV wrote, the Spirit of Truth who revealed and taught Sœur Thérèse de l'Enfant-Jésus the Way of Spiritual Childhood, but for all that the saint had pondered, groped, and suffered much in finding and exploring that partly new way.

"An intelligence above the average," one of her sisters wrote, "a precociously sure judgement, and a premature experience of suffering placed her while still very young in another atmosphere than that of earth. She entered into solitude at the age of fifteen, and gave herself up to lively and persistent inquiry. . . . Her way was not revealed to her in any ecstasy, she had to find it in the depth of dense darkness. . . . Touched by her constancy in boldly seeking a disregarded truth, our Lord heard her . . . and then there opened out for her and for thousands of souls, her way, her little way. . . ."

Nor should we imagine that Sœur Thérèse de l'Enfant-Jésus, under the guidance of the gifts of wisdom, of understanding, and of counsel, invented the whole of her doctrine without borrowing anything from those who had gone before her, and without consulting anyone. We have spoken of the way in which she studied the Gospels, the *Imitation of Christ,* and the works of St John of the Cross. Among those who may have initiated her to some extent in her way of simplicity, self-surrender, and spiritual childhood should no doubt be named Mère Geneviève, the spiritual foundress of the Carmel of Lisieux,

for whom Sœur Thérèse seems to have had a special esteem. "I should like to tell you," she wrote, "what a joy it was to have lived some years with a soul whose holiness was not impossible of imitation, but lay in the practice of simple and hidden virtues. . . . Such holiness seems to me to be the truest, the holiest; it is the sort of holiness I want, because it is utterly free from illusion." So Mère Geneviève set Sœur Thérèse, from her very entrance into the convent, an example of holiness worthy of imitation. We have already remarked that the foundress had no great liking for self-imposed penances; she advised "small acts of self-denial, especially interior ones, and so small at first as hardly to cost an effort." And we know what an essential part of the Way of Childhood is the asceticism of littleness. It was Mère Geneviève, too, who had introduced the devotion to the Holy Face into the Carmel of Lisieux. She had obtained permission to have a picture of Veronica's veil hung in the convent chapel. But the filiation between Sœur Thérèse and Mère Geneviève de Sainte-Thérèse must not be exaggerated. Mère Geneviève had only introduced Sœur Thérèse to the way of self-surrender; the saint, with firmer step and with greater genius, was to go the whole length of that way, encouraged and approved by Mère Agnès de Jésus. But in forestalling and far outstripping the foundress in the path she had pointed out to her, Sœur Thérèse was to

surprise and disquiet her. In the short Life of Mère Geneviève de Sainte-Thérèse we read :

" Sœur Thérèse de l'Enfant-Jésus did not find in her the help she might have expected in her seeking into the depth of our Lord's Sacred Heart. Although she had so often proved to be a prophet, Mère Geneviève never had the least inkling of the high destiny which awaited her illustrious daughter. In her humility she was sometimes startled by her daring flights of thought and used to rebuke her. In all probability God so willed it in order to keep the young saint hidden and to place the merit of her quest beyond all question."

That Mère Geneviève de Sainte-Thérèse should never have had any inkling of Sœur Thérèse's mission or of the glory which was to be hers in the future is a problem which may well afford food for reflection. And yet Mère Geneviève had been favoured with a mysterious dream which was of a sort likely to call her attention to her spiritual daughter's merits. A holy nun who was dead, Sœur Adelaïde, had appeared to her in a dream, dazzlingly beautiful, holding an ivory pen in her hand. With the pen she pointed to a book placed on a bookshelf beside the Gospels. On its back Mère Geneviève could read the words : *Life of* . . . Mère Geneviève had experience of revelations; she realized that this was no empty dream. Paralyzed as she was, and unable to go to the chaplain, the Abbé Youf, she asked that he might be sent for. But neither of them could interpret the dream exactly, nor discover what the *Life* was which ought to be

published, and which would rank after the Gospels and prove the lasting glory of the Carmel of Lisieux.

It often happens that the master is alarmed at the daring of a disciple who outstrips him. But how sad it is when the disciple feels that he is no longer understood or wholly approved by the very people who launched him on the right way! Sœur Thérèse, by the daring of her aims, frightened Mère Geneviève, and was, so to speak, disapproved of by her. A heavy trial indeed, and one which touched her to the quick. But perhaps the little saint was supported by some doctor of theology, or a wise, discreet, and duly authorized confessor?

Many of the great women saints, like St Clare, St Teresa of Avila, St Jane Chantal, were constantly enlightened by other saints or by skilful directors. Sœur Thérèse's task would have been made much easier if she had been helped by a chaplain like St John of the Cross or St Francis de Sales. But it is an undeniable and most remarkable fact that the saint never had a real director. She invariably laid her aims and the state of her soul before her confessors, and more especially before retreat-givers. But they were troubled by her unbounded desires, her confident trust in God's mercy, and her aspiration to rival the charity of the greatest mystics, and more than once they, too, nearly rebuffed her.

The foundress, Mère Geneviève, was fond of

saying that "God is no stickler for trifles" and that he will not keep count of our involuntary failings. Sœur Thérèse, who entered fully into these views, felt inspired by the spirit of wisdom to push her trust in God's mercy still further. She could not share the anxiety of some of the solitaries and Fathers of the Church on the subject of salvation. "Little children," she thought, "cannot be lost." But retreat-givers, on the contrary, with the intention of rousing those who were remiss to greater fervour, sometimes rather exaggerated the facility with which a nun can commit grave faults. Sœur Thérèse grew pale; she lost her appetite and could not sleep; she would have fallen ill if the retreat had gone on any longer. She had to wait some years before she came across a confessor who fully approved her way of self-surrender. This was Père Alexis, of the Recollets of Caen, who set her free from empty fears and advised her to launch boldly forth into the deep. *Duc in altum.*

"At that time I had all kinds of interior trials which I found it impossible to explain to anyone: suddenly I was able to lay open my whole soul. The Father understood me in a marvellous way: he seemed to divine my state, and launched me full sail upon that ocean of confidence and love upon which I had longed to advance but so far had not dared."

This seems to have been the only time when a director intervened in any decisive way to guide Sœur Thérèse's spirituality. Even he did

nothing more than approve, and, as if it were God's will that the saint should clear a path for herself, she was refused permission to see Père Alexis a second time. Sœur Thérèse could in all sincerity assert that she had never had any other director than our Lord himself. A novice once asked her:

"Then who taught you your little way of love? She answered: 'Our Lord himself taught me; neither books nor theologians were my teachers, and yet I feel in the very bottom of my heart that I am in the right. I have never had any encouragement from anyone, except from Mère Agnès de Jésus. Whenever I had an opportunity of laying open the state of my soul to any priest, I was so little understood that, like St John of the Cross, I prayed to God: 'Henceforth send me no messenger who cannot tell me what I want to hear.'"

There could not be a franker, more candid declaration, or one more apt to make us realize that the Way of Spiritual Childhood is the fruit of the gift of wisdom. It was not taught to Sœur Thérèse by either books or theologians; it was directly inspired by the Spirit of Jesus. Never was there a more striking fulfilment of those words of our Lord: *I confess to thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them to little ones.*

To sum up and to conclude, what characterizes the spirituality, the Way of Spiritual Childhood, which St Teresa of the Child Jesus taught, is, above all, simplicity. Her way is pre-eminently

a simplification. There is a very wise remark in the preface to her autobiography: "We are bound to admit that the spirit of supernatural childhood showed a tendency to decay. Many souls sought a refined perfection. . . . We who are called doctors in Israel, we taught the world a learned theology to which the faithful had not time to listen. And our Lord had pity on the multitude. He took a child, Thérèse . . . a child who revealed to them such simple and entrancing truths that the doctors had perforce to acknowledge their ignorance and followed the child in teaching the people."

The truth could not be more clearly stated. Yet Sœur Thérèse's simplicity was combined with discerning prudence and with deep wisdom. She herself warned us to be very circumspect in interpreting her doctrine. A novice told her of her intention to impart her way of self-surrender to her friends and relations. "Oh!" she exclaimed, "be very careful how you explain it, for, wrongly understood, our little way might easily be taken for quietism or illuminism. Don't think that it is a way of rest." The way of surrender is indeed no quietism; although it depends upon grace, it does not do away with all effort on our part. Nor is it illuminism; it does not dispense us from studying or from thinking, nor from due submission to the Church's authority, although its first recourse is to the impulses and inspirations of the Holy

Ghost. The Way of Childhood is truly that angelic life of which St John Chrysostom speaks; by the gift of wisdom it unites ingenuous simplicity with consummate prudence. *Simplicem esse cum prudentia, haec est vita angelica.*

CHAPTER II

THE SECOND POSITIVE PARADOX: LITTLENESS AND GREATNESS—THE GIFT OF FORTITUDE

"*Fecit potentiam in brachio suo et exaltavit humiles.*"—Luc. i, 51.

1. *Sœur Thérèse's humility and her self-effacement.*

We Catholics are so used to hearing moral greatness set side by side with voluntary and accepted humiliation that we no longer heed the strange contradictions involved in this paradox. The *Magnificat*, which we so often say or hear sung, is full of oppositions: *Respexit humilitatem ancillae suae* (*he hath regarded the humility of his handmaid*): *exaltavit humiles* (*he hath exalted the humble*). The psalms often remind us of the antithesis between the humble who are magnified and the mighty who are humbled; but the New Testament is indeed the Gospel of humility and greatness. Almost on every page we find the precept or the counsel of voluntary abasement: *He that is greater among you, let him become as the younger, and he that is the leader as he that serveth. Every one that exalteth himself shall be humbled: and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted.* Among the many passages in the Gospel which might be cited, the most characteristic of the Way of Spiritual Childhood is undoubtedly the one in

which our Lord calls a child and sets him in the midst of his disciples: *Amen, I say unto you, unless you be converted and become as little children you shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven. Whosoever shall humble himself as this little child, he shall be the greater in the kingdom of heaven.*

This famous passage in the Gospels is the corner-stone upon which Sœur Thérèse built all her teaching on the Way of Spiritual Childhood. Like that of the great mystics, her spirituality is based upon humility. But when we come to analyze the humility of the saints of Christianity, we soon find that this virtue bears a particular stamp in each one of them. It is evident that Sœur Thérèse de l'Enfant-Jésus had not to weep over the disorders of a worldly life. Not only had she not committed any mortal sins, but she had not even to reproach herself for the infidelities so bitterly regretted by her patron St Teresa of Avila: "In the noviceship," wrote the latter, "I used often to withdraw into solitude to weep over the sins of my past life." Sœur Thérèse would have found it difficult to deplore infidelities of this kind; her heart had never sensibly attached itself to any creature.

We hasten to add that it was no part of the little saint's spirituality to look back in order to humble herself by the remembrance of her past sins. When we hear of St Teresa of Avila regarding the fact that she had for a brief moment

set aside our Lord's sacred humanity on the faith of misleading books, as one of the greatest treasons in her life; and when we read of St Catherine of Siena melting into tears because she had yielded to a slight distraction in prayer, we are ready to believe that Sœur Thérèse de l'Enfant-Jésus might also have humbled herself at the thought of her past failings, if the Holy Ghost had urged her to this kind of humiliation. It has been very justly remarked that St Paul, unlike St Peter, does not seem to have often recalled the sins he committed before his conversion in order to deplore them. And if Sœur Thérèse did not continually weep over her sins, it was not only because she had not committed any grave sins, it was rather because this means of humiliation did not enter into her scheme of spirituality. We do not, as a matter of fact, find that she urged little souls in her Way of Childhood to humble themselves at the thought of their past sins. Doubtless she feared lest such introspection and the recalling of one's past life should awake more or less conscious satisfaction in one's pride or one's feelings.

St Teresa of the Child Jesus' humility lay above all in seeking to be forgotten. From the age of five until the last few weeks before her death she did her utmost to go unnoticed. In this particular characteristic of her humility, Sœur Thérèse again showed herself to be a faithful disciple of her master, St John of the Cross.

The latter had managed to efface himself so completely that his brethren went so far as to pronounce this summary judgement on the great mystical doctor: "His intelligence is below the ordinary." In Sœur Thérèse's canonization process we come across evidence which distantly reminds us of the case of St John of the Cross. The sister-cook's verdict on her is now known to nearly everybody, but it is so full of meaning that we feel bound to relate it here. Sœur Thérèse was very ill; she had just endured, with heroic patience, the process of blistering. She was in her cell, opposite the kitchen, and from the pantry she heard these words being said: "Sœur Thérèse de l'Enfant-Jésus is soon going to die; I really wonder what our Mother will find to say about her after her death. She will be hard put to it, for this little sister, for all her gentleness, has certainly done nothing worth the telling."

Those who know how gifted with discernment and the spiritual sense kitchen sisters are, and what opportunity they have of getting to know the good points of the other nuns, will be even more surprised than others at this strange mistake: "What will they find to say about Sœur Thérèse after her death?" The books, pamphlets, journals, articles, long or short, written about the saint in every language, are already to be counted by the thousand. It is the revenge of genius and of holiness. The sister-cook was,

it is clear, to be forgiven for not having discovered Sœur Thérèse's genius and her signal holiness. But how many other people were deceived or nearly deceived! "One had to take pains," said one of her confessors, "to discover that she was very intelligent." How are we to explain this peculiarity? Surely an intelligence above the average is evident and can hardly pass unnoticed? Some people, of course, have a happy memory, and facility of expression; they have, too, a certain assurance and great self-confidence, and shine in company. But others are wholly interior, more secret and mystical, nor are they capable of fully expressing themselves anywhere save in the intimacy of the few who are able to understand them. People with minds of this kind are as a rule utterly unappreciated by those who are most in contact with them; they like to withdraw into silence, and cloak themselves with humility and modesty; in order to discover the veiled light within, one must oneself lead a hidden and interior life and practise recollection. Sœur Thérèse's intelligence was of this sort; she loved to bury herself in obscurity.

"From the age of four and a half until Christmas, 1886," so Sœur Geneviève, her sister Céline, tells us, "Thérèse went through a period of obscurity. A veil seemed to be cast over the qualities our Lord had bestowed upon her. Her mistresses knew that she was intelligent, but in society she was considered incompetent and

awkward. . . . My uncle, Monsieur Guérin, used to say that her education had been cut short and was incomplete. True, she lent herself to such unfavourable judgements by never saying anything, and always letting other people speak."

When she entered Carmel she no doubt generously overcame her excessive childish shyness, but it was then that her resolution to imitate the hidden face of our Lord determined her to hide herself as much as possible from the eyes of men. She let others talk, unless charity demanded that she should entertain her neighbour. In the parlour, too, she allowed herself to be eclipsed by her sisters. For years she never spoke to anyone, except occasionally to Mère Agnès de Jésus, of the high thoughts, the great desires, the large-souled projects, the providential mission in fine, which she felt was entrusted to her. She kept all these things in her heart, like our Lady, and no one ever suspected her of being the foundress of a new spiritual way. The nuns who were in closest contact with her had no idea of the mighty labour of thought, inquiry, and attainment which was going on in the hidden depths of her soul. Who would have guessed that this young nun, very observant, it is true, intelligent as well as charming, but who, when all was said, had done nothing that was not quite ordinary, would be as great a glory of the Carmelite Order as St Teresa? We may recall the statement

made by Mère Agnès de Jésus : " I say that during her life the sublimity of her virtue may have escaped the notice of many nuns in the house, because of her simplicity and her humility." It need not surprise us that the older nuns who saw Thérèse Martin enter their Carmel at the age of fifteen should never have noticed her genius and her holiness. It may be that amongst us is living a saint, a genius, whom we have not discovered because we are extroverted and he all introverted. And when his glory shall shine forth before men, we shall say to ourselves : " Who would have thought it ?"

And so the humility of St Teresa of the Child Jesus lay primarily in seeking to be hidden. She even reached the point of preferring oblivion to contempt, for oblivion is the supreme mark of the utter indifference with which others regard us. It still is a sign of some consideration to be an object of jealousy or dislike; but to be utterly forgotten is a proof that one no longer has any place in the world. On the chart she had drawn up for her profession, and which she wore over her heart, Sœur Thérèse had written : " Grant that creatures may be nothing to me, and I nothing to creatures." Her prayer was to a great extent heard in her lifetime.

It would no doubt be a heavy and wellnigh unbearable trial to be utterly forgotten by men, without having any illusions about it, to live, as it were, unknown in a strange land, without

belonging to any family or country, or having any name. Yet to us who are not saints it would be harder still to be despised than to be forgotten. It costs us so much to be judged unjustly, that we ask ourselves whether saints really can attain to an actual love of harsh treatment. Like St Francis of Assisi, and so many other men and women saints, Sœur Thérèse de l'Enfant-Jésus loved humility to the point of being truly happy when she knew herself to be slighted.

It was gradually that the saint had learnt to rejoice in unjust or humiliating rebukes. Providence allowed her to be very harshly treated by the Prioress from her very entrance into Carmel :

" You found fault with me," wrote the saint at a later date, " whenever you met me. I remember once I had left a cobweb in the cloister, and you said to me before the whole community : ' It is easy to see that our cloisters are swept by a child of fifteen. It is disgraceful ! Go and sweep away that cobweb, and be more careful in future.' On the rare occasions when I spent an hour with you for spiritual direction, you used to scold me most of the time, and what grieved me most was that I did not see how to correct my faults ; for instance, my slow ways and want of thoroughness in my duties."

Mère Agnès de Jésus timidly attempted one day to intervene on her young sister's behalf, but Mère Marie de Gonzague stoutly maintained that the line she took was the right one. Mother Prioress tried in conscience to mortify her on the subject of humility. " When one day I told

Mother Prioress how distressed I was to see my little sister so neglected and always humiliated for no reason, she answered: 'That's the drawback to having sisters in the convent. No doubt you would like me to bring Sœur Thérèse forward, but I ought to do just the contrary. She is much prouder than you think: she needs to be continually humiliated.'"

Sœur Thérèse was not proud, but she was gifted, it is true, with a very forceful character. A character of that temper, as Mère Marie de Gonzague used to say, had no need of gentle measures, at any rate, from the moral viewpoint. A severe direction which tried her much was providentially of great value to her. The saint realized this better than anyone, and that is why she was sincerely and deeply grateful to Mère Marie de Gonzague. She knew the infinite worth of humiliations.

"It is commonly supposed in the community that you have thoroughly spoilt me ever since I entered the convent, but: *Man seeth those things that appear, but the Lord seeth the heart.* Dear Mother, I am grateful to you for not having spared me. Our Lord knew that his little flower needed the life-giving water of humiliation; it was too weak to strike root otherwise, and it is to you that it owes this great benefit."

A few years later Sœur Thérèse, who was already very ill, had given such proof of her virtue that the Prioress and the more clear-sighted of the nuns had no further misgivings

as to her mental and moral worth. "The divine Master," the saint then wrote, "has quite changed his method of cultivating his little flower; no doubt he found it had been watered enough, so now he allows it to unfold its petals under the warm rays of a blazing sun." In the sight of creatures she followed the perilous path of honours. But she took care always to regard her own helplessness and nothingness in the clear light which enlightened her. She considered that God had thrown a veil over her shortcomings, interior and exterior. "Because of this veil I receive many compliments from the novices—compliments without flattery, for I know they really mean what they say—but they really do not inspire me with vanity, for the remembrance of my misery is always with me." How continually careful she was to keep herself in humility, and to ward off any temptations to pride! Even as a child Sœur Thérèse had noticed how the mistresses at school were run after, but she was too high-minded to stoop to such base flattery. And later she had seen what a vitiating effect the praise and approval of their satellites may have upon superiors. She wrote, with a certain indefinable accent, the result of much and long thought and experience: "Oh, how we must pray for superiors, if we only knew what poisonous praise is always being offered to them!" As mistress of novices, Sœur Thérèse had no liking for servile characters, nor would

she have been guilty of tolerating flattery; she overlooked a few honest compliments, but she very much preferred criticism or even blame. This is so rare and extraordinary a fact that it is worth emphasizing.

"Sometimes my soul wearies of this over-sweet food, and I long to hear something else besides praise; then our Lord serves me a nice little salad with plenty of pepper and vinegar. . . . It is offered me by the novices just when I least expect it. God lifts the veil which hides my shortcomings, and my dear little sisters, when they see me as I really am, do not find me quite to their liking. With charming simplicity, they tell me how I try them, and what it is they dislike in me; in fact, they are as frank as if they were speaking of someone else, for they know that I am very glad when they act in this way. . . . I am more than glad, I am overwhelmed with the delight this banquet gives me. How can anything so contrary to one's natural inclinations afford such extraordinary pleasure? I could not have believed it to be possible unless I had actually experienced it."

That humiliation should become a delightful banquet to anyone must remain an insoluble and mighty mystery to us who only find bitterness therein. Yet by an effort of our reason we can manage to understand that a soul filled with boundless longings for perfection, and intimately convinced that humiliation is the first condition of all progress, should rejoice at the unexpected humiliations it encounters. Surely such instant joy in unforeseen humiliations must be a most striking proof of holiness.

There is a little incident in Sœur Thérèse's

life of which a nun who knew the saint intimately said: "It is the most edifying remembrance I have of the Servant of God." The edifying memories Sœur Thérèse left behind are certainly to be counted by the hundred. What then can this precious remembrance be, which is the most edifying of all? We need not think that it was an act of extraordinary mortification, it was simply an unforeseen humiliation accepted with joy. This is the incident in question. Sœur Thérèse was wasted with fever. A lay-sister brought her some beef-tea, which the invalid refused. The sister insisted. The saint explained that she could not drink anything, it would make her sick, and humbly begged the good sister to excuse her, while thanking her for her kind attention. The latter retired in a dudgeon, and said to another sister: "Sœur Thérèse de l'Enfant-Jésus is not only no saint, she is not even a good nun." Sœur Thérèse overheard the words and rejoiced greatly at them: "What joy to hear on my death-bed that I am not a good nun! Nothing could give me greater pleasure." And it was true that Sœur Thérèse was all holy joy at these words. With good reason does Mère Agnès de Jésus record this incident as "the most edifying remembrance the nuns have of the Servant of God," for an act of deep, spontaneous, and perfect humility reveals her holiness better than could any revelations, prophecies, visions, or ecstasies.

Mère Marie de Gonzague was able to bear the following witness, the importance of which is not to be exaggerated, to Sœur Thérèse de l'Enfant-Jésus a short while before her death : " My child, you are quite ready to appear before God, for you have always understood the virtue of humility." With the utter simplicity of the children of God, Sœur Thérèse answered : " Yes, I know, my soul has ever sought the truth. . . . I have understood humility of heart."

Humility, then, was the foundation, the corner-stone upon which Sœur Thérèse's holiness rested. Her novices record that she continually impressed its necessity upon them. " We always had to come back to that." It was one of the deepest virtues of one whom we rightly call the little saint from this point of view. " To find anything hidden," she wrote to her sister Céline, on August 2, 1893, " one must needs hide oneself. . . . The author of the *Imitation* tells us : ' If thou wouldst learn something to the purpose, love to be unknown and to be esteemed as nothing.' " The nuns have repeatedly said, and we must repeat it after them : " It is on humility that her little Way of Childhood is based." If we were to represent Sœur Thérèse's holiness by a pyramid towering to the sky, we might say that humility was its base, whilst love was its fabric and its summit. But the comparison is a lame one, and might even mislead some people. For the saint's humility

itself was steeped in grateful and high-souled love. So true is it that the supernatural virtues are closely linked together, and cannot be represented adequately by any sensible sign.

2. Sœur Thérèse's high-souled desires.

The virtue of humility, like all the other moral virtues, might, unless guided by prudence, lead the soul into certain excesses. The first fault which could result from an imperfectly understood humility would be cowardice. Excessive diffidence fetters the faculties, paralyzes them, and prevents them from being used to their fullest extent. On the other hand, the very unfavourable judgement we pass on ourselves would necessarily be mistaken, and mistakes are an evil. A saint, far from falling into the defect of humility, which, speaking generally, is cowardice or pusillanimity, would possess its complementary quality, magnanimity or greatness of soul.

In her mystical writings, and more especially in her *Life,* St Teresa of Avila took care to warn her Carmelite daughters against certain defects which border on humility.

". . . Some think it humility not to believe that God is bestowing his gifts upon them. Let us plainly understand this, that it is perfectly clear God bestows his gifts without any merit on our part; and let us be grateful to his Majesty for them, for if we do not recognize the gifts received at his hands, we shall never be moved to love him. . . . An opposite course tends to take away all courage; for we shall think ourselves incapable of great blessings, if we begin to frighten ourselves with the dread

of vainglory when our Lord begins to show his mercy upon us. . . . It is not possible, I think, our nature being what it is, that he can have the courage necessary for great things who does not know that God is on his side."

It is indeed evident that in order to have the courage for great enterprises, the primary condition is frankly and sincerely to admit the natural and supernatural gifts of intelligence, and of will, of piety, purity, apostolic zeal, and charity, which God has bestowed upon us without any merit on our part. We should, however, note that St Teresa gives the bold advice of having a high opinion of oneself only to those who have already attained to a certain degree of perfection. For if we are still full of worldly desires, hot-tempered, jealous, without devotion or true purity, we shall not be able in the dim and disturbed atmosphere of our soul to form a true opinion of ourselves, or distinguish our good from our bad points. It was to prayerful souls that St Teresa of Avila gave the precious counsels which Sœur Thérèse must certainly have read and reflected upon.

". . . We must open our souls to a great confidence. It is very profitable for us not to confine our desires within narrow limits. We should, on the contrary, believe that by leaning upon God, we shall be able to attain in time, through constant effort, to the perfection reached by many saints. If their souls had never conceived these great desires, and if they had not gradually put them into effect, they would not have reached so high a state.

God seeks for and loves courageous souls, as long as they are humble and do not trust in themselves. . . . The souls who have attained to union with God should, with humble, holy presumption, hold themselves in high esteem."

This is St Teresa's teaching on the necessary combination of magnanimity and humility. We have in a few words shown how humble Sœur Thérèse was, and we shall not have much difficulty in proving that she was magnanimous beyond all conception. From her childhood, as we have seen, she felt, through some hidden instinct, that she was born for great things. Joan of Arc's example was ever present to her mind, and she was haunted by the desire of becoming a great saint herself. She wrote:

"This desire may well appear rash, seeing how imperfect I was, and am, even now, after so many years in religion. Yet I still feel the same daring confidence that one day I shall become a great saint. I am not trusting in my own merits, for I have none, but I trust in him, who is virtue and holiness itself. He alone will accept my poor efforts, and raise me to himself, and by clothing me with his merits make me a saint."

St Teresa of the Child Jesus was, as we shall realize if we compare this quotation with the preceding ones, a worthy daughter of St Teresa. She had always loved all that was great and beautiful. At one period she developed a passion for knowledge, and with her eager temperament, learnt more in a few months than in the whole of her schooldays. Her impetuous desires

soon ran away with her, and without drawing rein she reached the furthest possible limits. After that she never hesitated. There was no stopping her once she was convinced that she ought to enter Carmel at the age of fifteen. So shy that she could only give utterance to her thoughts in her own family circle, she laid her apparently rash project before her father, her uncle, the superior of the Carmel, and the Bishop of Bayeux. She even appealed to Rome, and despite the express prohibition of the vicar-general, Monsieur Réverony, addressed the Sovereign Pontiff, Leo XIII. She clung, so to speak, to the Pope's knees, and the Noble Guard literally had to drag her away. Benedict XV was in a better position than anyone to appreciate Thérèse's courage at the papal audience, and that is why he wrote with perfect truth :

" Thérèse's attitude did not alter in spite of her direct and courageous appeal to the Pope. The futility of that long journey, the marks of disapproval, even contempt, which were so lavishly heaped upon her ! Were these trials to shake her resolution and make her set opinion of men before what she had believed to be the will of God? But heroic virtue implies enduring perseverance in acts. The more contradictions she met with from men, the more little Thérèse redoubled her acts of confidence and her protestations of surrender into the hands of God, and thus she prepared herself to climb the summit of Christian perfection by practising the virtues proper to spiritual childhood."

Thérèse, indeed, continued, as she herself wrote, to hope against hope. " My trust in God

did not grow less, and I still hoped to enter at Christmas." She was, as a matter of fact, received at Carmel a few months later. We have spoken of the impression of greatness she gave the nuns. Her desire of becoming a great saint and her resolution at once to realize her call to a high degree of holiness by heroic faithfulness to the rule, inspired respect. At one time she thought to imitate the Fathers of the desert in their generous mortification, but the Holy Ghost who was her guide closed to her a by-path which was not intended for her. But her desires for all that ever increased and soared aloft, and everywhere urged her beyond the limits of possibility. As we cannot quote it in its entirety, we refer the reader to that sublime passage in the autobiography in which Sœur Thérèse reveals the vastness of her desires. "O my Beloved . . . forgive my folly if I venture to tell thee once more my hopes and my heart's wellnigh boundless longings. . . ." And the saint tells how she came to feel within herself at once a call to be a crusader, a priest, an apostle, a doctor of the Church, a martyr. The call to be a crusader: "The spirit of a crusader burns within me, and I long to die on the field of battle in defence of holy Church." The call to be a priest: "With what love, sweet Jesus, would I bear thee in my hands when my words brought thee down from heaven. With what love would I give thee to souls." The call to

be a doctor of the Church, an apostle : " I would be a light unto souls . . . I would travel to every land to preach thy name, and to raise the glorious standard of the Cross on heathen soil. . . . I would be a missionary. . . ." The call to be a martyr : " Above all, I thirst for the martyr's crown. Martyrdom was the dream of my childhood : a dream which has grown with me in my little cell in Carmel."

To the wise of this world Christianity is a folly, a folly of sacrifice, of love, of the apostolate, and of desire. Sœur Thérèse's desires were, humanly speaking, contradictory, being as they were divine and eternal, boundless in time and space. She would fain have been a missionary in every corner of the globe, to the most distant isle, and that from the beginning of the world until the end of all ages. She wanted martyrdom in every form ; she wanted to be scourged, crucified, flayed alive like St Bartholomew, plunged into boiling oil like St John, ground by the teeth of wild beasts like St Ignatius of Antioch, and the like. And the forces upon which the saint relied in daring to conceive these desires were her weakness and humility. There you have that incomprehensible paradox between greatness and littleness : " Is there on the face of this earth a soul more feeble than mine? And yet, just because I am feeble, it is thy good pleasure to realize other desires wider than the whole world." By the light of the Gospel and the gift of

wisdom, Sœur Thérèse realized that her desire to be all things and to embrace all vocations were riches that might make her like the unjust steward in the parable, and she saw that her vocation was love, embracing all others. Thenceforward she longed to attain to the utmost limits of love, she longed to love our Lord as much as and even more than St Mary Magdalen. She had often heard it said in retreats and elsewhere that there had never been a pure soul who had loved more than a penitent one. And she had exclaimed: "Oh, how I should like to prove that saying false!" She had read of the unequalled love St Teresa bore to our Lord, and here she was trying not only to rival, but to outstrip that love. She once confided her heart's desire to a retreat-giver:

"Father, I want to be a saint," she said, "I want to love God as much as and even more than St Teresa."—"What pride and presumption," said the good Father; "you had better be content with correcting your faults, and not offending God, and with making some little progress daily; you must try to keep your rash desires within bounds."—"But Father, I don't think such desires are overbold, for our Lord said: *Be perfect, as your Father in heaven is perfect.*"

The priest was firm, and earnestly reiterated his counsels of moderation. Alas, for our sins, how rare are the confessors who are not excessively discreet! We must try to excuse the directors "who managed to frighten Sœur Thérèse de l'Enfant-Jésus and to paralyze her

impulses," her desires were so magnanimous and she seemed such a child. But we must draw a valuable lesson from it. However high and great they may be, if our desires be based upon humility, faithfulness to the rule, purity of heart and obedience, they can only be inspired by God; but if, on the other hand, they spring from self-love, and give rise to minor irregularities and unfaithfulness to one's daily duty, then they are illusions and are born of pride or concupiscence. The confessor had only to find out whether Sœur Thérèse was a humble, docile, and regular nun as well as generous in order to be able fully to reassure her. And this is just what Père Alexis, of the Recollets of Caen, did do.

3. *St Teresa of the Child Jesus' magnanimous conduct.*

Among the sayings of St Teresa of the Child Jesus preserved by her novices, one of the most searching ones, which opens up a boundless perspective on the universality of her views, is this advice which one would do well to take as a maxim: "Each one," she said, "ought to behave as though the perfection of the Order depended on her personal conduct." Young as she was, the saint fully realized that the perfection of her religious Order, and of the Church, in part depended on her conduct. A great philosopher has said: "So act that thy conduct may be taken as a rule for all." We might with greater truthfulness give the following counsel to every Christian soul if we follow Sœur

Thérèse's inspiration: "Each one ought to act as though the perfection of the Church depended on her personal conduct." We repeat, this clearly means that we must have a very high, a very magnanimous idea of duty. Timid, slack, or restless people are prone to imagine they would sanctify themselves more easily in other circumstances, times, or places, in some other family, association, or parish, or in some other congregation or convent. Generally these are simply dangerous illusions or poor excuses we devise in order to escape doing our duty. A Curé d'Ars sent to a poor, neglected parish will transform it and the whole countryside besides. Thérèse Martin, who at the age of fifteen entered a community which, like many others, could show beside some very edifying examples, some reprehensible members, too, might easily have led an easy-going, slack sort of life. A nun who came to Lisieux a little before this date, and who expected to find there the perfection of sanctity, was soon disillusioned. "It is true that when I entered the Carmel of Lisieux I found the community in a state which somewhat disappointed me. I thought that all Carmelites were saints, but gradually I became aware that there were some nuns who were not perfect." And this is the case in every congregation, association, or order which has not recently been reformed by the example and action of an exceptionally holy soul. We do not know a single

example of any religious Order which has not suffered some relaxation fifty years after its foundation. When we read of St Teresa returning to the convent of St Joseph at Avila, the first founded and reformed by her, in order to restore to it the fervour which was already on the wane, we are less surprised when we come across remissness and relaxation in the best communities. Except in rare cases, the general tendency is to a life respectable enough, but mediocre. "What accentuates the heroism of Sœur Thérèse's virtue," we are told, "is that in order to keep perfect fidelity, she had to swim against the stream, which indeed demanded extraordinary virtue."

We cannot indeed value the saint's magnanimity at its true worth unless we realize all that she owed, not so much to her surroundings as to her personal initiative. It belongs to magnanimity, to the heroism of Christian virtue, to be militant. And before we show how Sœur Thérèse was militant and even warlike, so to speak, we should once more assert that she was above all a lover of peace. "Whenever any difficulties arose, it was invariably Sœur Thérèse de l'Enfant-Jésus who with rare tact and skill restored peace in the community." She did the same for her relations and friends. "She only went to the parlour out of charity. If her advice were asked, she gave it simply and humbly, and always and everywhere seemed like an angel of

peace." When dealing with a certain nun who of her own accord always held to an opinion contrary to hers, the saint did all she could not to discuss the point with her, and avoided disputes by trying to change the subject of conversation: "for the author of the *Imitation* says that 'it is more profitable to leave to everyone his own way of thinking, than to give loose to contentious discourse.'" The presence in a community of four sisters and their first cousin, all of the same family, was bound to arouse a certain amount of opposition. Sœur Thérèse used to say, with great psychological insight as well as with a real love of peace: "We must beg pardon for all living together under one roof."

Thus the saint pushed the spirit of conciliation to its utmost limit: she had what in monastic parlance is called "a good community spirit." But in Sœur Thérèse this love of peace did not carry with it the faults so often found to be combined with it: we mean the excessive concessions peace-loving people unconsciously make to those about them. An exaggerated love of peace and conciliation is perilous; it opens the door to abuses, and to relaxation in the case of the weaker members of the community, while it countenances unjustifiable or arbitrary exactions on the part of the headstrong and domineering members. Even in the religious and monastic life we sometimes encounter a certain conciliatory pacifism, which from many points of view is

worse than passing faults or even than strife and discord. Through excessive mutual tolerance which, to give it its true name, is a sort of tacit complicity, monks and nuns who are bound to reprove one another, eventually allow such liberties to be taken with the rule, that the community or the entire Order gradually becomes relaxed.

We might wonder how it was that even in the lifetime of the venerated foundress, Mère Geneviève de Sainte-Thérèse, whose virtue we have praised, who had so often been Prioress, and whose authority must have been undisputed, the community could have suffered from discord and thus be checked in its course to perfection. It seems that Mère Geneviève had been somewhat too conciliatory; through excessive modesty and self-effacement, which are the very virtues which make her so venerable in our eyes, she had surrendered some part of her authority into hands less experienced and less skilful than her own. St Teresa of the Child Jesus, no less humble than Mère Geneviève, but far more vigilant and determined, and with the help of her sisters and some fervent nuns, was to restore to the community all its early fervour, chiefly by the example of her constant heroism. "Even though everyone were to disobey the rule," she used to say, "it is no excuse for us. Each one of us ought to behave as if the perfection of the Order depended on her personal behaviour."

By continually and literally practising such precepts as these, we should save the whole world.

"The Servant of God, one of her sisters bears witness, could be fearless if the occasion required, and chose rather to brave the nuns' wrath, and that of the Superior, and even to leave the community than to let a novice stray into dangerous paths."

This evidence alludes to an episode related in the autobiography. The saint told it in that simple, even ingenuous, style of hers, which invariably throws the unwary off the scent, and makes them regard as merely natural something which was in reality heroic. It happened before she had been entrusted with the direction of the novices. She had been given permission to talk to a lay-sister novice seven years older than herself. The foundress of the Discalced Carmelites, St Teresa, had advised such intercourse, and the Constitutions authorize them in order that the sisters—with the Prioress' leave, of course—"may kindle in one another greater love for their Bridegroom." It should be noted that, according to the spirit and the letter of the rule, the nuns who avail themselves of such meetings are bound fraternally to reprove one another. Otherwise these conversations would become a veritable abuse, "and resemble," writes the saint, "those of worldly friends." Sœur Thérèse's companion in the noviciate had conceived a too natural affection for the Prioress. There was much in her behaviour which was

regrettable. There is not the least doubt but that in remonstrating with her friend the saint might indirectly by a counter-blow touch the Prioress. For the nun whom Sœur Thérèse intended to warn was doubtless not the only one whose affection for the Superior was too natural; consequently it was an abuse, and one that is only too common in communities, which she was about to denounce. She had fully foreseen and weighed all the consequences and the import of her action. The day on which she intervened has remained a red-letter day in the history of the Carmel of Lisieux. "It was on the feast of the Immaculate Conception, December 8, 1892, a never-to-be-forgotten day for me," declared the fortunate nun who had the virtue to accept and to understand the saint's reproof in the canonization process." "I was very careful," writes Sœur Thérése, "not to anticipate the time appointed by God. One day when I was thinking over the permission we had to talk together, it came home to me that I must no longer fear to speak out. . . . I begged our Lord to inspire me with kind and convincing words, or, better still, to speak himself for me. . . . When the time came for us to meet, the poor little sister saw at once that my manner had changed, and, blushing, she sat down beside me." And twenty years later this nun confirmed Sœur Thérèse's story in the canonization process. "She kissed me," she says, "a thing

which she never did, which made me wonder what was going to happen." And as a matter of fact, her kindness and gentleness were the prelude to some very plain speaking:

"Your affection is wholly natural, which is not only a great hindrance to your perfection but a danger to your soul, and if you are always going to behave in this way, you would have done better to remain in the world. . . ." And Sœur Thérèse, after having spoken in this strain for some time, closed her friendly rebuke with this warning: "If our Mother notices that you are upset, you can just tell her all that I have said to you. I would rather she turned me out of the monastery, if she thinks fit, than shirk the duty of giving you this warning for the good of your soul. . . ."

Sœur Thérèse's virtuous intervention was blessed by God. Many lovers of peace would have slunk away in like circumstances, and have made good their retreat down some side alley, going off at a tangent from the path of heroic and perilous duty. But it is just this petty, mean, pacifist diplomacy which countenances abuses and encourages relaxation. Sœur Thérèse, so we have been told, had anything but a weak, yielding, or sceptical character; she seemed destined by temperament for action and combat. The meditation and the continual study of Holy Scripture had impressed upon her that the life of a Christian on earth is meant to be a struggle, that in a sense our Lord came "not to bring peace on the earth, but a sword." Sœur Thérèse, speaking to Mère Marie de Gonzague, has told

us how gently she administered this friendly reproof. Others have filled in the gaps in her story by adding that she had displayed a wisdom and a firmness capable of "stamping out" the abuse which had too long been tolerated.

"I shall always look back upon this time as a time of great grace." The saint herself wrote these significant words. The episode on which we have purposely dwelt at some length took place in December, 1892. Early in 1893, Mère Agnès de Jésus was elected Prioress. Soon after Sœur Thérèse was officially entrusted with the spiritual direction of the novices. The pioneer work she had done in administering a friendly reproof to one of her sisters in religion was to be merely "the prelude to the masterpiece," which she was now commissioned to carry out. When the novices of any community or Order are given an exemplary and lasting formation, the progress of the religious reform becomes a mere matter of time. From the very first, when the saint saw at a glance the heights to be scaled, she realized that the undertaking was beyond her powers. But her weakness was her strength, and she relied entirely on the assistance of God. She felt that she must before all things efface and deny herself in order to make room for the action of grace.

The saint tells us of two conditions requisite for training souls. The first, a difficult one, is "to set aside one's own tastes and ideas and to

lead souls not by one's own particular way, but by the particular way our Lord points out for them." The second, more difficult still, consists in exercising constant watchfulness and dispassionate firmness without any weakness:

"The most difficult part, what costs me more than anything else, is having to notice their faults and least imperfections, and to wage war against them. Unhappily for me, I was going to say, but that would be cowardly, so I will say, happily for my sisters, ever since I placed myself in our Lord's arms, I have been like a watchman on the look-out for the enemy from the highest turret of a fortified castle. Nothing escapes my vigilance; indeed, I am often surprised at my own clear-sightedness. . . . I would rather receive a thousand reproofs than have to administer a single one, yet I cannot help feeling that it is necessary that the task should cause me pain. . . . I know, dear Mother, that your little lambs find me severe. Were they to read these lines, they would say that, as far as they can see, it does not distress me to run after them, and show them how they have soiled their beautiful white fleece, or torn it in the brambles. Well, the little lambs may say what they like, in their hearts they know that I love them dearly; there is no fear of my imitating *the hireling . . . who seeth the wolf coming, and leaveth the sheep, and flieth.*"

The saint, as we see, was of opinion that to shut one's eyes to slight faults and imperfections and not to correct them was not the way to maintain or to increase regular observance in a community. A convent in the midst of the world is like a besieged stronghold, surrounded by enemies; it runs the risk of being taken by sur-

prise, of being betrayed or undermined. People in the world are greatly mistaken when they suppose that contemplatives have no battles to fight. St Teresa of Avila used to compare her convents to *castillos*—that is, to strongholds of perfection, whose office it was to maintain the religious spirit among Christians. St Teresa of the Child Jesus' conception is fundamentally the same: She is like "a watchman on the look-out for the enemy from the highest turret of a fortified castle." And she is ever ready to give the alarm, to denounce and to wage war on relaxation of any sort.

The Christian, and especially a Christian vowed to sanctity, must wage war; that is the inevitable law. Sœur Thérèse knew it: "Our Lord," she wrote, "has granted me the grace never to shrink from the struggle; I must at all costs do my duty." And on her death-bed she still waged war on the smallest failings in herself and her sisters. Mère Agnès de Jésus came to see her one day, and said in a joking way: "Well, now, our warrior is laid low." Sœur Thérèse replied: "I am not a warrior who has fought with earthly weapons, but with the sword of the spirit which is the word of God. And therefore, illness has not been able to lay me low. Only last night I used my sword against a novice. . . . I told her I should die sword in hand." She kept her word. One of the nuns came, quite wrongly, to complain, and Sœur

Thérèse, after having reasoned with her in vain, eventually gave her a severe rebuke: "What a handful that novice is," said the infirmarian, "it must make you dread seeing her again." "A good soldier," answered the Servant of God, "does not shrink from a struggle, and have I not said that I would die sword in hand?"

However little one may have studied the New Testament, one cannot help comparing these words with the teaching of St Paul. *Fight,* said the Apostle, *like a good soldier of Jesus Christ.* "I am not a warrior," said Sœur Thérèse, "who has fought with earthly weapons;" and the apostle wrote: *Put you on the armour of God, that you may be able to stand against the deceits of the devil. For our wrestling is not against flesh and blood, but against principalities and powers, against the rulers of the world of this darkness, against the spirits of wickedness in high places.* Sœur Thérèse put St Paul's teaching into practice. Burning with zeal for the house of God, the little saint dared one day publicly and with no little warmth to stand up against an evident abuse and usurpation of authority. The defender in the canonization process rightly estimated this magnanimous action: "It is characteristic of saints to be moved to anger only when they see an injury done to God, and their indignation is justified by the motive, as the angelic doctor

writes: 'Anger is praiseworthy when according to reason.'"[1]

The promoter of the canonization process, who was surprised at hearing nothing but praise of the Servant of God, questioned one of her sisters and urged her to tell him of at least one small failing. Sœur Geneviève, who, to judge from the autobiography and the evidence she gave during the hearing of the cause, was frankness itself, answered after a moment's thought: "She sometimes showed severity in dealing with the novices, but I really cannot say that it was a fault. It was holy indignation, and she lost neither her self-possession nor her peace of mind."

It was holy indignation; the words could not be better chosen, for it is the very term used by St Thomas Aquinas, the angelic doctor, in the article just quoted by the defender of Sœur Thérèse. On certain occasions, few and far between, it is true, holy indignation which does not entail the loss of one's self-command and peace of mind is a virtue, even a duty. "Without indignation," wrote St John Chrysos-

[1] "Omni laude digna Dei famula, quae acta zelo justitiae et divini honoris non dubitavit sese objicere irae et vindictae illius quae ob suum ingenium, si antistita fuisset electa, facile ab eadem poterat poenas expetere apertae illius improbationis: *dilexit enim justitiam et odivit iniquitatem.* Sanctorum autem est tum solummodo commoveri, dolere, indignari quum injuriam Deo afferri videant: irae, si qua fuit, motum causa irascendi egregie defendit, ut scribit Angelicus: *secundum rationem rectam, tunc irasci est laudabile.*"

tom, "truth is not forwarded, law is not upheld, faults are not repressed. . . . Excessive patience foments vice, encourages carelessness, and leads astray not the wicked only, but also the good." By quoting these words St Thomas Aquinas gave them full approval. He taught that it was possible to sin through not having used holy indignation when it was expedient or necessary.

4. The supernatural gift of fortitude.

How was it that Sœur Thérèse de l'Enfant-Jésus was always able to command that high-souled fortitude and fearless daring which enabled her to brave every difficulty? Above all, how did she contrive to reconcile her magnanimity, her heroism, with her deep humility and consciousness of her helplessness? Humanly speaking, it is an unfathomable paradox. Littleness and greatness, how are we to explain this contradiction?

Sœur Thérèse herself has explained to us very simply, by means of a very up-to-date comparison, how by making herself very little, and stooping to the ground, she obtained unlimited power, and could raise herself to heaven. The simile of the lift is familiar to all the saint's disciples, and is an example so useful for the understanding of her teaching that we feel bound to quote her description in full:

"You know, Mother, that I have always longed to be a saint, but alas, I have always found, when I compared myself with the saints, that I am as far removed from them as the grain of sand, trodden under the feet

of the passers-by, is remote from the mountain-top lost in the clouds. But instead of being discouraged, I said to myself: 'God would not inspire me with longings which cannot be satisfied, and so I may, for all my littleness, aspire to sanctity.' For me to become great is an impossibility. I must bear with myself and my many imperfections, but I will seek out a means of going to heaven by a very little way, very short and straight, quite a new little way. We live in an age of inventions; nowadays rich people need not trouble to climb the stairs, they have lifts instead. Well, I mean to try and find a lift to raise me up to our Lord, for I am too tiny to climb the steep stairway of perfection. So I looked in the Holy Scriptures for some sign of this lift for which I longed, and I read these words from the lips of eternal Wisdom himself: *Whosoever is a little one, let him come to me.* . . . Never did sweeter or more tender words gladden my heart. The lift which must raise me up to heaven is thy arms, sweet Jesus. . . ."

St Teresa of the Child Jesus never wrote more weighty words than these regarding the Way of Spiritual Childhood. It was precisely by stooping low and making herself more and more little, trusting all the while to our Lord's infinite goodness and omnipotence, that she attained to sanctity without having to scale the toilsome stairway of virtue such as it is described in certain complicated treatises on perfection. Far from attempting to become great, and relying on her strength of will, she became more and more diffident of herself, and lost herself in her own nothingness: "To attain that, I need not grow; on the contrary, I must remain little, I must become still less." There is no question here

of mere human virtue wholly based upon a systematic education of the will. It is our Lord's arms which are to take the child and carry it up to the top of the stairway. Our Lord's arms are the lift; in other words, in theological parlance they are the gift of fortitude. "The arms," writes St John of the Cross, "symbolize that fortitude, and when our weakness leans upon it, it is transformed and has part in the fortitude of God." *Fecit potentiam in brachio suo . . . et exaltavit humiles* (*He hath showed might in his arm . . . and hath exalted the humble*).

We repeat, for it is worthy of note, since no distinction is more often forgotten by Catholics, and overlooked even by spiritual writers, that it is not a question of the natural virtue of fortitude, which is the third of the four moral virtues, but of the fourth gift of the Holy Ghost, which is the gift of fortitude. If we study the Catholic doctrine of the gifts of the Holy Ghost as it is expounded by the Fathers of the Church and by St Thomas Aquinas, we shall make no mistake, and we shall grasp more clearly and fully how exact, how inspired of God are Sœur Thérèse's words when she writes: "The lift which must raise me up to heaven is thy arms, sweet Jesus." Not that the saint asks us passively to wait without any effort or attempt on our part until the divine virtue, the fortitude of Christ comes to lift us out of our depths and to carry us to the

heights of perfection. Sœur Thérèse used kindly to explain to her novices how they ought always "to lift their little feet" and climb the first step of the stair until at last our Lord himself came to help them of his own accord, without merit or effort on their part. But between that initial goodwill, which makes itself little, and looks to our Lord for everything, and the moralist's confidence in and cult of the will, the distance is immeasurable, infinite, and supernatural.

Sœur Thérèse was asked one day: "You must have had a hard struggle to overcome yourself so entirely?" She answered with a certain indefinable note in her voice: "Oh, it wasn't that!"

If she were to read certain pages in which her perfection, her heroic acts, are regarded as resulting from the natural virtue of fortitude, St Teresa of the Child Jesus, with that indefinable note which came naturally into her voice whenever she spoke of supernatural truths, would have exclaimed: "Oh, it wasn't that!" If we would have an exact idea of Sœur Thérèse's holiness and of her Way of Spiritual Childhood, we must resolutely leave earth behind us, and not take too natural a point of view, but raise our minds by prayer and humility to the supernatural order, and have recourse to the gifts of the Holy Ghost, the gift of Wisdom, of Fortitude, and of Charity.

Sœur Geneviève de la Sainte-Face recorded

this characteristic trait in the canonization process, that before she had learnt from the promoter's interrogatory how to classify the virtues, she had arranged those of the saint under the virtue of fortitude. But Sœur Geneviève knew better than anyone how supernatural was that fortitude in Sœur Thérèse, without being forced or strained. It was a fortitude deeply imbued with humility and love; by constantly humbling herself at our Lord's feet, and by uniting herself to him in adoration and self-surrender, St Teresa of the Child Jesus obtained from heaven the strength to continue her consistently magnanimous and heroic life without any intermission.

CHAPTER III

THE THIRD POSITIVE PARADOX : JOY OF HEART AMID SUFFERING—THE GIFT OF LOVE

"*Gloriabor in infirmitatibus meis.*"—2 Cor. xii, 9.

Of all the paradoxes or antinomies we come across in St Teresa of the Child Jesus' spiritual life, the most glaring and the most mysterious is that of her joy in suffering. How can one rejoice in tribulation? How is it possible, and what a mystery it is! In the Sermon on the Mount our Lord proclaimed the blessedness of those who suffer and who mourn. The Apostle Paul has laid down as a principle the maxim: *To rejoice in one's infirmities.* And thenceforth how many saints and followers of Christ have drawn their deepest joy from their cruellest trials! Yet, among all the saints and blessed, Sœur Thérèse de l'Enfant-Jésus seems to us to be especially distinguished by her formal resolution smilingly to endure every kind of trial and martyrdom.

But did the saint really suffer much? As by a surpassing and unremitting heroism she had attained to the point of always being able to show a smiling face, many of the nuns who rubbed up against her wondered whether she really did.

"My soul," wrote the saint to her Prioress, Mère Marie de Gonzague, "has known trials of many kinds: I have suffered much here below. As a child, I bore my sufferings sadly; now I taste the bitterest fruit with joy and peace of mind. You would have, I own, to know me thoroughly, dearest Mother, not to smile when you read this, for has ever a soul apparently been less tried than mine? But if the martyrdom which I have endured for the past year were made known, how astonished everyone would be!"

In this very intimate outburst the saint, be it noted, tells the Prioress: "You would have to know me thoroughly not to smile as you read this." And so Sœur Thérèse tells us in so many words: to know her thoroughly we must understand the meaning of her smile and fathom the whole depth and extent of her martyrdom.

Martyrdom had always been her great ideal. "Martyrdom was the dream of my childhood, a dream which has grown with me in my narrow cell in Carmel." In the last years of her life the saint attained to the very folly of martyrdom. "I need them all, to slake my thirst." All kinds of martyrdom; not only bodily, but moral martyrdom, that torment of the conscience. To quote but a single example: Sœur Thérèse had always been purity itself. "One must have seen the Servant of God," writes Mère Agnès, "to gauge her purity. . . . She was, as it were, wrapped in innocence; and although she owned to me that she had never been tempted against that virtue, she exercised the greatest vigilance,

in order to keep her treasure whole until her last breath." Although this virtue was dearer to the saint than the apple of her eye, she owned to "having regretted that she had not suffered temptations against chastity, in order to be able to offer God every sort of martyrdom." Nowadays we no longer understand the folly of martyrdom; one has to go back to the Middle Ages or to apostolic times to find it in all its intensity. By the very vehemence of her feeling it would seem as if Sœur Thérèse had steeped herself in the living blood-stained streams of primitive faith. On her profession day, she had penned these lines on the paper she wore next her heart:

"Jesu, my heavenly bridegroom, grant that for thy sake I may die a martyr; give me martyrdom of soul or of body. Or rather give me both the one and the other!"

Her bridegroom, Christ, who is not to be outdone in generosity, heard his beloved's prayer on the great day of her profession, and gave her more than she had asked or even could have conceived. For Sœur Thérèse was thinking of two sorts of martyrdom only—that of the body and that of the soul. There was a third sort, which had not occurred to her, the most painful of all, which was to be granted to her in full measure—that of the soul and spirit itself. And these three sorts of martyrdom, be it noted, were not successive but simultaneous. It is difficult,

even impossible, rightly to conceive of such a synthesis or complex of martyrdoms of body, soul, and heart, which together tortured the little saint on the rack of pain like so many executioners. It must not be supposed that we are exaggerating; a very brief reflection on the evidence which we shall adduce will convince our readers that we have rather minimized the facts. "There are no words to express these things," wrote Sœur Thérèse, "and I shall always fall short of the reality."

1. The body's martyrdom.

From what the saint herself tells us, the martyrdom of body began about a year and a half before her death. It was the evening before Good Friday. Sœur Thérèse had carried out all the Lenten observances to the letter—fasting, abstinence, and the rest. She was feeling very well. How greatly should we distrust that feeling of health and strength in people who are both upheld and wasted by some inward fever!

"In the early hours of Good Friday, our Lord gave me the hope of soon joining him in his beautiful home in heaven—a blessed memory, indeed! I could not obtain permission to remain watching at the altar of repose throughout the night of Maundy Thursday, so at midnight I went back to our cell. Scarcely had I laid my head on the pillow than I felt a hot stream rise to my lips. I thought I was going to die, and my heart nearly broke with joy. But as I had just put out our lantern, I mortified my curiosity until the morning and slept in peace. At five o'clock, when I was called, I remembered that I had some good news to learn. I went up to the window, and found, as I had expected, that our hand-

kerchief was soaked with blood. Dearest Mother, what hope was mine! I was firmly convinced that on this anniversary of his death, my Beloved had allowed me to hear his first call, like a sweet gentle murmur, heralding his joyful approach."

These are certainly some of the finest lines the saint ever wrote, and most characteristic, moreover, of her utterly ingenuous and naïve style. The diction is clear and fluent. Unbelievers, who are not so friendly to Sœur Thérèse, will say that she "dipped her pen in rose-water." But if we go deeper and try to realize the scene, either in imagination or from memory, we shall have no difficulty in recognizing all its heroism. When brave men, soldiers or fearless officers, with serious chest wounds, after some days in bed, suddenly "felt the hot stream rising to their lips," when they hastily put the handkerchief to their mouth and saw it stained with blood, their anguished faces, their despairing and imploring looks, betrayed their distress of mind. Hæmoptysis, or spitting of blood, the first sign of approaching death, is repulsive to nature, especially if it is quite unexpected. Only the religious minded can accept such a trial with peace or joy of mind. Little Sœur Thérèse in this connection speaks of "a sweet gentle murmur, heralding the bridegroom's joyful approach." This was her way of describing and accepting in all simplicity the most dramatic events; but we should be under no misapprehension as to the surpass-

ing heroism implied in such self-possession. "I thought I was going to die, and my heart nearly broke with joy."

Can it be said that her joy was disproportionate, or the result of a feverish and exalted mood? No, because the saint had acquired an unparalleled dominion over all her faculties by the asceticism of littleness she had practised all her life, by her conscientious submission to the rule, as well as by the mortification of her sensitiveness on every little occasion. We said that the extreme limit of the asceticism of littleness rejoins the asceticism of greatness. Now we see that it does. At the very moment, one of the most tragic in her life, when Sœur Thérèse heard her death-knell for the first time, she again repressed her naturally eager curiosity, so victorious in her was the habit of virtue over desire. "As I had just put out our lantern, I mortified my curiosity until morning."

And yet what uncertainty could torture a man's curiosity more than that of knowing whether he is soon to die? The young Carmelite nun's little act of mortification in not lighting her lamp to make sure whether she had really coughed up blood or not is simply sublime. But perhaps the joy she felt, the efforts she had to make to master her curiosity, made her restless and wakeful? We must not attribute her supernaturally heroic resignation to any merely human and stoical virtue of fortitude. We have

here to do with the gift of fortitude, one of the seven gifts of the Holy Ghost. "On my Confirmation day," Sœur Thérèse used to say, "I received the strength to suffer." We must not confuse this gift even with the Christian virtue of fortitude. St Thomas Aquinas teaches that virtue, which is subject to reason, requires deliberation and effort, and generally shows some slowness and labour in its exercise. But the gifts of the Holy Ghost, on the contrary, incline our faculties spontaneously to submit to the indications of divine Providence. Because she had disposed herself for such inspiration by humiliation, it was without any human effort, without hesitation, that the saint surrendered her understanding and her will to the promptings of the Spirit. And for that very reason she slept the sleep of the just and gave herself up to quiet slumber. Then, like a betrothed maiden who had deferred the opening of a precious letter till morning, she rose at once, knowing that she had "some good news to learn."

Sœur Thérèse dressed quickly and, quiet and recollected, went down to the chapel, where she said Prime with much fervour. Upheld by her inward joy, she felt neither pain nor fatigue. "I made haste to go and kneel before my Mother and tell her of my happiness. I easily obtained permission to finish Lent as I had begun. It was Good Friday. Happy to suffer something for the love of Jesus Christ, Sœur Thérèse took

the discipline for the space of three *Misereres*. The afternoon she spent in doing housework, though she had only eaten a little bread and water at the most. She climbed on to a stool and set to work to wash the panes of some high windows. A novice who saw her noticed her pallor and, suspecting some serious interior trouble, offered in the kindness of her heart to take her place. But Sœur Thérèse refused, went on working, did penance, and prayed until nightfall. At last she went back to her cell. "On the evening of that happy day," she wrote, "I returned full of joy to our cell, and was quietly falling asleep when my sweet Jesus gave me the same sign of my speedy entrance into heaven as on the previous night."

We must not think that our saint was under an illusion. She had always foreseen that she would die young. Besides, we are told that she was singularly free from illusion in everything, especially in all that concerned herself. Humility is utterly truthful and misrepresents nothing; it is a flawless and spotless mirror which physically and morally reflects our personality and events as they are. Sœur Thérèse knew that she had had her death-blow. Because of her characteristic love of silence, and out of charity too, she said nothing about these hæmorrhages to her sisters or even to Mère Agnès de Jésus. She kept her secret for more than a year. She held the key of her soul. When on her deathbed

Mère Agnès de Jésus complained in a sisterly way of such excessive and heroic reserve, Sœur Thérèse made answer: "Little Mother, thank God for it! If you had known the state I was in and had seen me so neglected, it would have distressed you too much!"

How are we to explain the fact that Sœur Thérèse was not better looked after? To begin with, whatever may sometimes be thought in the world, nuns do not retire into convents to take care of their health. On the other hand, the saint, as we have just seen, thanks to that gift of fortitude which never belied her, managed by her smile, her pleasant ways, to throw the Prioress off the scent. In the last editions of the autobiography the witnesses of Sœur Thérèse's illness wrote: "She managed to make so little of the hæmorrhage of the previous night that Mother Prioress allowed her to practise all the penances prescribed by the rule for Good Friday." Mère Marie de Gonzague, as we see, was in part quite excusable. Without doubt Mère Agnès de Jésus, or one of the saint's sisters, or one of the novices to whom she was dear, would not have let themselves be blinded by her heroic smiling simplicity. But Mère Marie de Gonzague had always been a robust religious; she had never experienced ill-health. Besides, she really loved Sœur Thérèse, yet without that tenderness which makes a mother, a sister, or a friend so watchful and clear-sighted.

The little saint was a centre, a bond of union in the community, but she never flattered anyone, although she was friendly to all. This impartiality may further explain why the Prioress did not at first suspect a serious illness and why Sœur Thérèse was not at once cared for as she might have been.

It is clear that the invalid needed rest, long hours of sleep, abundant and strengthening food, a warm, dry climate, or, failing that, a sunny and well-heated room. But the saint loved privations, and, except under obedience, would not have taken a single step to avoid them. Besides, spring and fine weather came. Sœur Thérèse, who was endowed with an extraordinarily resistant temperament, appeared to pick up again. As she always appeared equally and perfectly satisfied, she was invariably given all the remains. Providence permitted that the saint should suffer a long bodily martyrdom for the salvation of a greater number of souls, and therefore the little that was done to spare her added, by an evident fatality, to her trials. In a recent biography we may read how the little sister was deprived of a boiled egg, even of her drink, because the nun who sat next to her, who suffered from diabetes or some thirst-causing disease, drank the greater part of the cider that was served to her.

The summer passed fairly well. Sœur Thérèse. who had always had a delicate throat

and chest, was occasionally shaken by a little dry cough which she could not manage to hide, and which proclaimed to the nuns who loved her the implacable progress of the hidden disease. Autumn came, then winter, the terrible winter of 1896. The fits of coughing became daily more frequent, longer, and more incessant.

The saint was quite glad to be in a distant cell, so that the nuns could not hear her coughing. We have already said that the nuns had not suspected that she felt the cold excessively and beyond all measure. It was the most terrible of her physical sufferings. The malady which impoverished her blood made her very sensitive to cold. Neither the cells, nor the passages, nor the convent chapel were heated. Only during the worst of the cold weather was the fire lit in the community room, as was generally the custom thirty years ago and still is in contemplative Orders. Assistance at the night office of Matins, which lasted well into the night, became very painful. Sœur Thérèse struggled heroically against extreme weariness, numbness, and giddiness; she kept going. "If I do die," she said, "they will soon find it out." To climb the stairs to the first floor, after Matins, became an additional source of suffering. Towards the end she used slowly to mount the stairs, clinging to the banisters, and it took her half an hour to get to her cell. When she went into the community room to warm her limbs, half-dead with

weariness and cold, for an instant or so, she soon paid dear for the relief it gave her. "To get back to her cell she had to walk fifty yards down the open cloister." What a blast, when there was a gale blowing or icy rain eddying under the arches! The coarse habit, a big brown tunic with wide-open sleeves, caught at the waist by a girdle, is very heavy and affords little protection against draughts. Sœur Thérèse forbade her novices to close their sleeves with pins; the cold must be faced without shrinking, with a smile on the lips.

Another long corridor on the first floor, dark and chilly, and then the invalid reaches her "solitary" cell. Her hands and bloodless fingers are nipped with cold. She has to undress; a sturdy nun would do it in a trice, but the little Carmelite is exhausted; her feet and hands are stiff and frozen; it takes her over half an hour to undress. It is close on midnight. With a last humble prayer of entreaty to her Lord she lies down on the hard pallet. The two threadbare and worn woollen and serge blankets do not suffice to warm her. The poor emaciated invalid coughs for a long time, but no matter, since no one hears her. All is quiet at last. She will have a few hours of light sleep. At six o'clock the alarm will sound, and she will have quickly to dress and begin another day of sixteen hours, not counting meals and free time. For a whole week in the winter Sœur Thérèse could

not manage to get thoroughly warm. The damp cold in the chapel, in the cell, under her inadequate coverings of her austere pallet, found its way at length into every limb and to her very heart. A cruel trial indeed, and a depressing one. Far from having exaggerated, we have not told everything; the task of revealing her heroism in detail we may leave to her biographer. But we should remember the saint's avowal already quoted, which must be repeated in order to fathom its full meaning: "Physically, what I have suffered most from during my religious life is cold; I have suffered so much that I have felt like dying of it." The saint had asked for martyrdom of body; her prayer was heard.

2. The heart's martyrdom

In the case of Sœur Thérèse de l'Enfant-Jésus, the body's martyrdom may at least have been tempered, one would think, by her sisters' presence at her side. She did indeed draw much consolation from them; but if one only knew what a still more fertile source of sharp sacrifices it was to the saint! After the body's martyrdom the heart's martyrdom. And this is the most opportune moment to remind ourselves that "many pages of this story will never be read on earth." Sœur Thérèse, who uttered this reflection as though it were a sigh, could no doubt have enlightened us more fully on the subject. But she did not; she made haste to forget. Thérèse's guardian angel would have had to

count the blows, for he alone witnessed them. At the age of sixteen, during her clothing retreat and in reference to the very marked ill-will which some of the nuns showed towards her, she wrote: "I do indeed long for those heart-wounds, those pin-pricks which cause one such pain."

The presence of four sisters belonging to the same family in a small enclosed contemplative community is quite an exceptional and abnormal fact. The constitutions of religious Orders have so clearly foreseen the inevitable disadvantages arising from the simultaneous presence of sisters in a community, that they have framed restrictive measures intended to limit their powers. For instance, more than two cannot have a vote in the council. The four sisters were severally endowed with high qualities which were the harmonious complement of one another. One can understand that in a Carmel of about twenty-three nuns, the four Martin sisters might form a "block" which might arouse suspicion and implacable hostility. Mère Marie de Gonzague, who, despite the deficiencies in her character, was from some points of view exceptionally gifted, was disturbed, though without cause, when she saw the increased authority the saint and her sisters were acquiring in the community by their prudence and right-mindedness. So that Sœur Thérèse would have been a greater favourite with a certain set in the community if

she had been the only one of her family. In this sense Mère Marie de Gonzague could say: "Sœur Thérèse de l'Enfant-Jesus is perfect: she has only one fault, that of having three sisters in the convent." Yet if the four sisters had been admitted into the community, it was to a very large extent due to the influence exercised by Mère Marie de Gonzague, who was Prioress at the time. For the latter had foreseen the great benefits the Carmel of Lisieux would reap from their admission.

Community life, whatever may sometimes be said by way of comparison, is not exactly family life. It is not that affection is less keen and devoted, but that it should be of another order, a supernatural affection. Sœur Thérèse had from the very first clearly discerned that delicate, yet real and most important, distinction which separates family affection, which is wholly natural, from religious affection. And that is why she used to tell her own sisters: "When I am gone, take care you don't lead a family life." Sisters, then, who enter the same convent ought to effect a sort of transposition in their affections. They ought to love one another as nuns, as *Sisters*, no longer simply as sisters. It seems a mere nothing, but what opportunities it affords of countless acts of self-denial! St Teresa of the Child Jesus always remained faithful to that law of religious friendship which to a certain extent implies the sacrifice of family friendship.

This was another source of martyrdom to the heart, and a cruel one at that:

"You also know, Mother, that our Lord has offered me more than one bitter chalice through my dearly loved sisters. The holy king David was indeed right when he sang: *Behold how good and pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity.* But such unity on earth can only exist amidst sacrifice. It was not in order to be with my sisters that I came to this holy Carmel; on the contrary, I foresaw that in curbing my natural affection I should have much to suffer."

Sœur Thérèse—it was another of her frequent sayings—only wanted to act supernaturally. On the delicate point of family relations she especially wished to be exemplary. The very true and suggestive remark has been made that in most of the photographs of the community, the saint is hardly ever near her sisters. When Céline entered the enclosure as a postulant, Sœur Thérèse, after having kissed her, fearing lest she should concede too much to nature, was already slipping away when the Prioress bade her take her sister to the cell reserved for her. She never told her sisters anything which went beyond the ordinary limits of conversation between the nuns, and when secrecy was asked of her she kept it faithfully. Thus she painted a picture for a missionary without breathing a word to Mère Agnès de Jésus. Now, she had to fetch the materials for painting, her brushes and burnisher, from the room where "her little mother" was working,

without being seen, taking advantage of her absence or retiring to the library. At the beginning of her life in Carmel, Sœur Thérèse was given as aid to Mère Agnès de Jésus, then refectorian. There were many opportunities of making spiritual confidences or of exchanging some marks of affection. But the saint and her sister only uttered the words strictly necessary to their work. "O my little mother," she wrote afterwards, "what I suffered at that time! . . . I could not open my heart to you and I thought you no longer knew me." When Mère Agnès de Jésus was nominated Prioress, Sœur Thérèse could, like many others, have gone frequently to talk to her, to entrust her soul to her direction once a week, as the established custom was. This direction was obligatory at least once a month. Sœur Thérèse was the one who saw the least of Mère Agnès de Jésus. The saint's conduct in her relations with her family was sometimes so mortified, and to all appearances so contrary to nature, that it was not even approved by the saintly foundress of the Carmel of Lisieux.

"After a ten days' retreat, Sœur Thérèse de l'Enfant-Jésus came to recreation without even having said, 'How do you do?' to her beloved little Mère Agnés de Jésus, which hurt the latter very much. She hoped that at least she would go and sit beside her—but she did not. Mère Geneviève scolded her, and told her that it was not the way to understand true charity."

Père Auriault, S.J., to whom this story was

told, very justly attributed it to the virtue of magnanimity. If the saints never did any action which rose above the level of mediocrity, how could they lead a heroic life or be inspired by the folly of the Cross?

In her autobiography Sœur Thérèse explains how, at a given date, about two years before her death, there was serious question of sending Mère Agnès de Jésus, her little mother, and Sœur Geneviève de la Sainte-Face, her sister Céline, to the Carmel of Saïgon. This again was a fertile source of sharp self-denial. "I would not say a word," she wrote, "to hold them back, though my heart ached at the thought of the trials awaiting them." This again was martyrdom. What added to her sufferings supernaturally and so weighed upon her as to make her heart ache, was that she greatly doubted whether her sisters' departure was in conformity with the manifest will of God.

However, as the saints are always ready to submit to all that God permits, even when it seems to countenance human failings, Sœur Thérèse was quite willing to be an exile herself, and to go to Tonkin. Her generous heart foresaw unfathomable depths of oblivion and abnegation, and she firmly stepped forward to cast herself into them there to be utterly buried. She dreamt of being forgotten and forsaken, as others dreamt of glory and honours. Two months

before her death, she wrote to Mère Marie de Gonzague :

" Let me tell you, Mother, why, if our Lady cures me, I wish to answer the call from our Mothers of Hanoi. . . . If I am destined to leave the cradle of my religious life, it will not be without a sharp pang. I have a sensitive heart, and, just because it can suffer so much, I want to give our Lord all it can bear. Here I am loved by you and all the sisters, and this affection is very sweet to me. That is why I long for a monastery where I should be unknown, where I should taste the bitterness of exile. . . . My only aim would be to do God's will, and sacrifice myself for his good pleasure. I feel sure I should not be disappointed, for when one expects nothing but suffering, one is surprised to feel any little joy. . . ."

" I want to give our Lord all the suffering I can bear "—always the same thirst for sacrifice. One might ask oneself whether it were only to offer our Lord an expiatory sacrifice that Sœur Thérèse desired and sought the heart's martyrdom. But on the subject of brotherly love she had built up for herself on the Gospel teaching a complete doctrine to which she attached much importance and which she endeavoured to practise. She had carefully meditated on that new precept of our Lord's : *Mandatum novum do vobis, ut diligatis invicem, sicut dilexi vos* (*A new commandment I give unto you: that you love one another, as I have loved you*). Reflecting how our Lord had loved men, she had very justly remarked that what distinguishes the love of one's neighbour in the New Testament is

its universality. In the Old Testament, love might yet be individualistic and, above all, exclusive. A man might hate his enemies, love himself first and his neighbours next. The preeminently new commandment of the Gospel was love of one's neighbour, of strangers, and of one's enemies even at the cost of one's own life. To give one's cloak, to turn the other cheek, to imitate the good Samaritan, to give one's life to save one's brethren; all the heroism and universalism of that love which broke down the narrow partitions of Jewish egotism Sœur Thérèse understood to the full, and she sought to apply it to the least details of community life. She had an instinctive distrust of that proverb borrowed from the old law which is too often made to serve as justification for very selfish views—"Charity begins at home." The saint held that the counsel of charity implied, first, the sacrifice of self.

Is it not indeed evident that, in order to have a universal love for one's neighbour, one must sacrifice one's individual and family preferences almost at every turn? But it was just such a heart's martyrdom that Sœur Thérèse was seeking. When one selects for one's friend a considerate, intelligent, and virtuous person, more often than not one is seeking and loving oneself. With a subtlety of analysis worthy of La Rochefoucauld, Sœur Thérèse de l'Enfant-Jésus scrutinized whatever egoism or indi-

vidualism there might be in her love for her neighbour, in order to stamp it out; she incessantly crucified her nature, the heart of flesh within her.

"When our Lord," she wrote, "gave the apostles a new Commandment—his Commandment—he was not content with saying: *Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself,* but would have them love even as he had loved, and as he will love to the end of time. . . . As I meditated on these divine words, I saw how imperfect was the love I bore my sisters in religion. I saw that I did not love them as our Lord loves them. I realize now that true charity consists in bearing all our neighbours' defects, in not being surprised at their weakness, and in being edified by their least acts of virtue."

How sublime and simple a programme of charity! If only one were to put these last three lines into practice, what peace and happiness would reign in families and in communities! But where was Sœur Thérèse to find the strength to love her sisters and her neighbours as our Lord himself loves them? In her union, her spiritual communion with our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament. "Yes, I know that when I show charity to others it is simply our Lord acting in me, and the more closely I am united to him, the more dearly I love my sisters."

In order to be able to love one's sisters universally like our Lord, one must as a primary condition sacrifice all family affections and, moreover, all particular friendships. But it is cruel and painful, especially in the beginning, to break

off or sever all attachments and particular friendships. Sœur Thérèse had been hard on the nun whose affection for Mère Marie de Gonzague was too emotional; she had shown her that in so acting she was loving herself. But no one better than the saint knew the struggle God sometimes asks of us in order to prevent our affections from clinging to creatures. She wrote to that same Prioress:

"I remember that when I was a postulant I was sometimes so violently tempted to seek some satisfaction and a few crumbs of comfort that I had to hurry past your cell and to hold on to the banisters to keep myself from turning back. Various permissions I wanted to ask, and countless pretexts for yielding to my natural desires suggested themselves, but I am truly glad now that from the beginning of my religious life I did not listen. I already enjoy the reward promised to those who put up a brave fight. I no longer feel that I need deny myself these consolations, for my heart is established in God. Because it has loved him only, it has gradually grown larger until it can give those who are dear to him a deeper and truer love than if it had been centred in a barren and selfish affection."

"Not to become centred in a barren and selfish affection." This is another of those maxims of the saint which bears the stamp of manifold experience and ripe reflection. There are many people who pursue a high ideal of perfection and of apostolic work who have become barren and have to a great extent failed in their mission, and have spoilt the best years of their life because they have let themselves be absorbed and drained

by some passionate and exclusive particular friendship. It is universal charity which our Lord requires in his new commandment. The most weighty advice one can give to generous souls vowed to the cult of perfection, to the service of God, is never to become centred in a barren and selfish affection, however specious the pretext may seem.

The hearts of people who thus concentrate on some particular friendship become indifferent and hardened towards the rest of mankind. In order truly to be our Lord's disciple one must love one's neighbour, who might easily be burdensome and even hostile to one. One must overcome one's antipathies. Sœur Thérèse was by temperament very sensitive and refined; she experienced those antipathies and, so to speak, those innate hostilities which make our whole being averse to a certain person. "We may feel drawn towards one sister, whereas we are tempted to go a long way round to avoid meeting another. Well, our Lord tells me that this is the sister one must love and pray for . . . and that one must prove one's love." And Sœur Thérèse did prove it; she proved it by offering of her own accord to lead a poor infirm sister who was hard to please from the chapel to the refectory every evening. The episode of Sister Saint-Pierre will become a classic, if it is not already so. "It cost me a good deal to offer my services, for I knew the difficulty, or rather the impossibility, of

pleasing the poor invalid." Through her rare delicacy, and by taking as much pains over her task as if she had been leading our Lord himself, the little saint managed to win the heart of the old paralyzed nun completely.

But Sœur Thérèse de l'Enfant-Jésus' great triumph was the complete victory she gained over one of those unreasoning dislikes which set every instinct of our nature against some one person. The nun in question was fervent, but had some small irritating shortcomings.

"A holy nun of our community annoyed me in all that she did, so I set myself to do for that sister all that I should do for the one I loved most. Every time I met her I prayed for her. . . . I tried to do her a service whenever possible, and when I was tempted to answer her sharply, I hastened to smile sweetly and to turn the conversation. . . . And often when the temptation was very severe, I would run like a deserter from the field of battle if I could do so without letting the sister guess what a struggle was going on within me. . . . One day she said to me with a beaming smile: 'Dear Sœur Thérèse, won't you tell me what it is that attracts you to me? Whenever we meet, you greet me with such a sweet smile.' What attracted me was our Lord hidden in the depths of her soul; our Lord who turns all bitter to sweet."

Sœur Thérèse must have won many victories of this kind. But what makes the aforesaid incident so singular and unparalleled is that the community very nearly thought that it was a particular friendship. The saint's eldest sister, Sœur Marie du Sacré-Cœur, was completely

taken in. "I had a certain feeling of jealousy about it," she admits with edifying simplicity, "and I said to her one day: 'I can't help telling you about a grievance I have; I have got an idea that you are fonder of Sister X than you are of me, and I don't think it is fair, for, after all, God made family affection. . . . You always look as if you were so delighted to see her. . . .' Sœur Thérèse laughed heartily, but she never breathed a word to me of the feelings of dislike that nun inspired her with."

Our Lord, it is true, turns all bitter to sweet, and we shall try to prove this soon. But although it often has its reward here on earth, the bitterness is none the less sharp for all that. It is indeed a sacrifice, a heart's martyrdom, always to seek out as though from choice, though without appearing preoccupied or exclusive, the people whom we most dislike. We should not advise little souls to aspire to such a heavy trial at first; it would crush their will, as yet little inured to warfare. We shall only be able to reach such perfection of charity gradually by continually denying our daily promptings to selfishness.

3. The soul's martyrdom.

We have not attempted to depict the martyrdom of heart or of body in Sœur Thérèse de l'Enfant-Jésus; we have simply tried to draw attention to them. We have said that the saint, when she asked on her profession day for this double martyrdom, had been heard beyond

all her aspirations. And, indeed, our Lord reserved a third martyrdom for her, which one may call the soul's martyrdom, because it touched, not her heart or her body, but her spiritual faculties, and more particularly her understanding in its most precious knowledge, beliefs, and supernatural intuitions. Thérèse had from childhood been brought up in a firm and absolute belief in an eternal reward. "When we listened to our parents talking about eternity," says the eldest of her sisters, "young as we were, we felt inclined to look on all mundane things as mere vanity." The dogma of the Paradise which is reserved for those who deserve it had always been one of the fundamental supports of the saint's spirituality. "From my childhood I had a feeling that one day I should be free from this land of shadows . . . my heart's most secret and inmost longings told me that there was in store for me a land more fair, an abiding dwelling-place, just like Christopher Columbus, whose genius anticipated the discovery of the new world."

That intuition of heaven, of a spiritual and eternal world, was, in the saint's case, a supernatural presentiment which afforded her some sort of proof of its existence. On the terrace at Les Buissonets on those clear summer evenings when she and her sister Céline were talking about heaven, her mind caught some glimpse of that blessed state. "There was no room for

doubt; our souls had left faith and hope behind; love had made us find on earth him for whom we longed." A few years afterwards in the parlour at Carmel there was the same luminous faith. "Just as at Les Buissonets, we lifted not our eyes but our hearts to heaven, soaring above time and space, and for the sake of eternal bliss we chose to suffer and to be despised here on earth." The thought of heaven was, in truth, one of the young Carmelite's strongest supports, and she used it like a handrail in climbing the *via dolorosa* of her countless acts of self-denial. "I had so little virtue," she wrote, "that these small acts of self-denial cost me a good deal, and I had to console myself with the thought that it would all be made known on the day of judgement." Never had the saint had the shadow of any temptation against faith, and the more she progressed in her religious life, the clearer grew the light. Less than two years before her death she had so lively and clear a faith "that the thought of heaven was her sole happiness." A last but decisive remark will suffice to show how deep this certainty was anchored in her heart; she could not conceive, like so many pious souls who have never been tempted, that atheists could exist. "I could not believe that there could be men devoid of any faith, and I was convinced that those who denied the existence of another world were really saying what they did not think."

The little sister was soon to know by experience that the heaven of one's faith may as quickly be covered with black clouds as the heaven of this earth. Why such awful doubts should suddenly have overwhelmed Sœur Thérèse's intuitions of heaven is something which can only be explained as a trial. The saint tells us that this crisis of faith, or rather these unforeseen temptations, weighed upon her soul shortly after she had had her first hæmorrhage, just when she was thinking that it was "a sign that she would soon enter into eternal life." And lo! just as in the case of someone who loses his eyesight, all became dark. Had Sœur Thérèse trusted too much to the support of that certainty she felt of heaven? She seems to hint that she had. In early childhood the thought of heaven had been a vague dream not unmixed with natural satisfaction. "That evening at the hour when the sun seems to sink into the vast ocean, leaving behind it a trail of glory, I sat with Pauline on the bare rock, and looked long on the golden furrow which she told me was an image of grace illumining the way of faithful souls on earth." We should recall Thérèse's reflections in the meadow while her father was fishing: "I listened to the distant sounds, the murmuring wind, sometimes a few uncertain notes of music from a military band in the town a long way off; all this gave a touch of melancholy to my thoughts. Earth seemed a place of

exile, and I dreamt of heaven." In order that her faith might reach perfection, Sœur Thérèse's soul had to be purged of all over-sensitive impressions. The saint herself, with that rare insight into mystical truths, has in a couple of lines explained this much more lucidly than we could have done: "Once," she wrote with regard to her temptations against faith, "this heavy cross might have discouraged me. Now it simply takes from me any natural satisfaction I might feel in my longing for heaven."

We can gauge how heavy was the trial from the saint's admission that she might not at one time have been strong enough to endure it. And so Sœur Thérèse, who had embraced every sort of suffering, illness, the humiliation of her father's disease, and the rest, would not have been able, until she attained to sanctity, to withstand the continual torment of doubts against the faith without becoming discouraged. We may conclude that it was, beyond any doubt, the sharpest of her interior trials. The very basis of her spirituality, of her whole moral and mystical strength, had been stormed, and at times seemed to be tottering to the ground. Once the thought that "there was a heaven" would enable her to endure the sharpest sacrifices with hope and joy. Now it was the very support, the ground beneath her feet that was giving way. The dogmas of the Catholic faith are bound up with one another. A Christian cannot doubt the

existence of heaven without a counter-blow falling on his faith in the divinity of Christ and the truth of his promises. And we should add that belief in an eternal reward is essential, not only to Christianity, but to natural religion; so that it was in very truth the deepest foundations of her faith which Sœur Thérèse felt were being undermined day and night by some unseen enemy.

"When my heart wearies of the surrounding darkness, and tries to find some rest in the consoling thought of an eternal life to come, my anguish increases. The very darkness seems to become the mouthpiece of the unbelievers, who in mockery say: 'You dream of a land of light and fragrance, you dream that the Creator of these wonders will be yours for ever, you think one day to escape from the mists wherein you now languish: forward, forward! . . .' Dear Mother, this description of my sufferings is as far from reality as is the first rough sketch from the model, but I do not want to write more fully on this subject, I should be afraid lest I were to blaspheme. . . ."

The more we study this temptation against faith in Sœur Thérèse's autobiography and in the canonization process, the more we realize that it was a heavy one, and that it must have been very depressing. It lasted almost without interruption from Easter, 1896, until the saint's death; that is, until the month of September in the following year.[1] The little sister dared not

[1] Sœur Thérèse wrote in June, 1897: "This trial has not lasted for a few days or weeks only: I have been enduring it for some months past, and I am still awaiting the hour of my deliverance." The saint had to wait until the ecstasy of her death.

unbosom herself to her novices or to her sisters, lest they should be afflicted with the contagion of doubt. . . . She made an exception in favour of Mère Agnès de Jésus. On her deathbed, when the latter was watching beside her in the infirmary, she said to her: "If you knew what awful thoughts are haunting me! . . . The arguments of the most hardened materialists thrust themselves upon my mind. Ah, little mother, what it is to have such thoughts when one loves God so!"

Temptations are given to saints solely in order to enable them to attain to a higher degree of excellence in the particular virtue against which they are tempted. Francis of Assisi, sick unto death, lying like holy Job on the earth, and further threatened with blindness, as a reaction against his sadness sang his magnificent song of thanksgiving to the light, the sun, and its Creator. Just in the same way Sœur Thérèse de l'Enfant-Jésus, in order to overcome the thick darkness of doubt, began to compose poems which were full of faith and hope. "When I sing," she wrote, "of the bliss of heaven and the eternal possession of God, I feel no joy; I am only singing of what I wish to believe." Most of the nuns who came in contact with her thought she had fewer temptations than anyone else.

"Mother," she wrote, "the nuns do not know what I have to suffer. . . . Last night real

anguish came upon me, and the darkness deepened. Some accursed voice seemed to say: 'Are you sure God loves you? Has he told you so? It is not the opinion of those who will have to justify you before him.'" The saint fought her doubts without stopping to discuss them, nor did she refute captious objections. "I have to endure them," she used to say, "but all the time I am making acts of faith continually." Of her own genius and inspiration she practised the great spiritual law so energetically enunciated by Pascal, which bids us seek faith by deed, work, and prayer rather than by argument. "May God forgive me!" she cried. "He knows very well that, although I do not get any consolation out of my faith, I nevertheless strive to do the works of faith. I have made more acts of faith during the past year than during the whole of my life." A fortunate temptation indeed, which constrains the soul to reach the summit of virtue!

In her simple and expressive style the saint used a great and sombre figure to represent the length and depth and height of her trial. "Reverend Mother, if you judge by the poems I have composed this year, it must seem as though I have been flooded with consolations, like a child for whom the veil of faith is almost rent asunder. Yet it is not a veil; it is a wall towering to the very heavens and shutting out the starry sky." She was living in a dark and

starless tunnel. As her doubts became more and more serious, her confessor thought it his duty to warn the dying nun that her spiritual state was very dangerous to her salvation.

Such, so far as we are able to appreciate it—for "there are no words to express these things"—was the saint's martyrdom of soul. Now is the moment to remember that to gauge the whole of Sœur Thérèse's martyrdom we must be sure and take into account all its various forms. We remarked in passing that it was just at the time when she began to cough blood that her doubts came upon her. It is, however, true that when she had the first two hæmorrhages Sœur Thérèse found boundless encouragement in the glowing hope she had of "entering soon into eternal life." But a few days after Easter—a week later—her soul was "overwhelmed with thick darkness, and the thought of heaven became matter for conflict and torment." And it was during this very year that there was question of breaking up the group of sisters and lessening their influence by sending Mère Agnès de Jésus and Sœur Geneviève to the Far East. The coincidence of date emphasizes the coincidence of these heavy trials. So let us, then, in thought essay to synthesize or to summarize all the martyrdoms endured by St Teresa of the Child Jesus. When the phantoms of doubt came upon her and said, "Forward! forward! Rejoice in death, which will give you not what you hope, but a yet

darker night, the night of nothingness . . . " it was when she was like to die of cold, when she felt pierced to the very marrow by the damp. For temptations to doubt and despair assail us most when the body is suffering from pain or physical depression. And it was then that she had to contemplate the possibility of a separation from her sisters. When an evil spirit is driven out of a soul, said our Lord, he departs, but he returns with seven others worse than himself, and together they resume their assaults on the victorious soul. Sœur Thérèse had asked that she might have every sort of martyrdom, not successively, but simultaneously. We have seen how this prayer of hers was answered.

4. Cheerful and loving acceptance of suffering.

The death for which Sœur Thérèse so longed was to be long in coming, and the agony was to be terrible. But what it behoves us most carefully to consider is that all these sufferings heaped one upon another, all these different sorts of martyrdom, the saint endured, not only patiently, but in the utmost peace. She had of set purpose resolved to accept the cruellest trials gratefully and to offer them to our Lord with a smiling face. It was a sort of wager she had made with the angels and blessed in heaven! "I fancy," she used to say, "that they want to see how far I shall push my hope."

The Stoics had said, "Suffering, thou art but a name," and they suffered with brave impassibility, humanly speaking heroic, but cold and

dreary. The heroism of Sœur Thérèse, who offered her sacrifices to God with the gentlest cheerfulness, was of a far higher order. This latter sort of heroism is thoroughly Christian and, be it said, thoroughly French. When the young officers fresh from Saint-Cyr left the trenches with a smile on their faces, their courage, for all its simplicity, was none the less meritorious. We should notice the sometimes almost imperceptible smile which makes the face of St Teresa of the Child Jesus so attractive, for all its wisdom. That heavenly smile is a flower of a divine and mystical love. It conceals all the abnegation, the immolation, of whatever was too human in her nature. To interpret Sœur Thérèse's angelic smile in the most obvious way, and to see in it merely her youthfulness, is utterly to misunderstand her character. Her sisters tell us :

" She always appeared gracious and smilingly cheerful, and unless one knew her more intimately, one might imagine that she pursued an easy path full of consolations. This is how it is that many who read her life do not discern the meaning of her smile : they overlook the cross so carefully hidden under the flowers. They forget the words of the royal prophet."

We should remember that the saint has affirmed that she did not discover or, so to speak, invent that divine and mystic smile until she was fifteen years old. And many were the attempts, sometimes fruitless, which she made to practise

it at first. But in the end our Lord had regard to his handmaid's goodwill and sent her the spirit of spiritual joy.

"Until the age of fourteen I practised virtue without any idea of making it a joy: that is a grace which was bestowed upon me later. . . . When I have a great deal of pain, when anything painful or unpleasant happens, instead of putting on a sad countenance, I meet it with a smile. At first, I did not always succeed, but now it is a habit I am glad to have formed."

We might multiply our quotations on this theme almost to infinity. For when we deal with joy in suffering we are certainly touching upon the most characteristic feature in St Teresa of the Child Jesus as far as externals are concerned. She will remain, of all the saints, the one who knew best how to accept suffering with a smile. "I have often noticed," said her novice mistress, "that good and holy nuns will bear reproofs or unkind remarks with resignation and patience; but to make them matter for joy and gladness is something I never saw in anyone except in Sœur Thérèse de l'Enfant-Jésus."

"There are trifles," said the saint, "which please our Lord more than the conquest of the world, a smile or a kindly word, for instance, when I feel inclined to say nothing or to appear bored."

We seem to discover Sœur Thérèse wholly in this statement, with her esteem for little acts of self-denial, her love of our Lord, of her neighbour, and, if we may say so, her cult for

Christian cheerfulness, which is the expression of her inward charity. We should once and for all grasp and, above all, practise this essential truth, that a kind word spoken to one's neighbour for the love of God, when one feels inclined to be sulky or disagreeable, may be more pleasing to almighty God than the conquest of the world. If Catholics, if pious people, would only always and on every little occasion practise this kindly charity in their daily trials, Catholicism would soon conquer the entire world.

But this interior and visible joy, this heavenly smile, is surely a great contradiction, a paradox, amid such cruel mental and bodily suffering, and where are we to find the key to the paradox? A single word will suffice to reveal the mystery; it is love, divine love. Even human love will work marvels here on earth. It is a principle of truly magic power. The young girl of yesterday, careless, fragile, and weak, is capable of the utmost courage, daring, devotion, and vigilance, of keen insight, of unwearying heroism, and forgetfulness of her own suffering when once she becomes a mother and loves with passion. Human love can effect the sublimest transformations in a moment, as though by the stroke of a wand, and that joyfully, without previous study or preparation, and without effort. Clearly it is not by dint of methods or theories, nor by sustained training of the will, that the weak and timid girl, in becoming a mother, becomes

heroically strong. Here the principle is not the human will, but love. And if human love is, so to speak, a transformer of such extraordinary power, what shall we say of divine love?

"When one loves," wrote St Augustine in a famous passage which will be handed down to the most remote posterity, "one does not suffer, or if one does the very suffering is loved." In St Teresa of the Child Jesus the secret of her cheerfulness in suffering is divine love. When all is said, it is in her love for our Lord that we shall find the solution of all the contrasts and paradoxes her life may offer, inwardly or outwardly. Her vocation, as she herself has said, was love. But it was by the deepest humility, plunging deep down to the very ocean bed, that she succeeded in reaching the dizzy heights of love. "Then, sinking down into the depths of my nothingness, I rose so high that I was able to reach my goal." By humbling herself and so obtaining strength from our Lord, for grace flows into humble souls as water into the depths, Sœur Thérèse felt able to accept every office and every trial with joy. "My heart, like that of St Cecily, is full of song," she said in the midst of atrocious suffering. Divine love is, in the last analysis, St Teresa of the Child Jesus' secret; love is the keystone of all her virtues,[1] it is the

[1] The gifts of the Holy Ghost properly and essentially constitute heroic Christian perfection, but according to St Thomas Aquinas, just as prudence is the keystone of all the moral virtues, so charity is the central principle on which all

solution of all paradoxes in her, and it was love which, through the abyss of suffering, was to bring her to bliss.

"Then, beside myself with joy, I cried: 'Sweet Jesus, at last I have found my vocation. Love is my vocation. . . . In the bosom of the Church, my mother, I will be love. . . . So shall I be all things, so will all my dreams come true. Why say that I am beside myself with joy? The words do not express my meaning. Rather has peace become my portion, the calm and tranquil peace of the sailor who sees the beacon which lights him to port.'"

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the other supernatural gifts depend: "*Sicut virtutes morales sibi connectuntur in prudentia, ita dona Spiritus Sancti connectuntur sibi invicem in caritate.*" [*Summa Theologica*, I-II, art. 5, *ad* 68.] It goes without saying that the gifts by no means exclude the practice of the virtues.

EPILOGUE

SŒUR THÉRÈSE'S DEATH

It is not our intention to give a precise or detailed account of St Teresa of the Child Jesus' last days on earth. We leave that difficult task to her biographer. We simply propose by means of a few comments and short quotations to show how divine love, with its power of transforming the soul, wrought in the saint that mysterious combination of inward joy and cruel suffering in that sore pass. We have made a close study of the life of several saints, and have in each case noticed that their death was strikingly significant of their particular virtues.[1] We feel sure that the nuns who were with Sœur Thérèse will not gainsay us if we assert that the little saint was never fuller of supernatural wisdom, never humbler, never more divinely inspired, more cruelly tried, more serenely cheerful, more deeply consumed with divine love than during the last weeks of her life. The higher she rose towards the term of

[1] In the canonization process Sœur Geneviéve asserts: "The last few months the Servant of God spent on earth were an echo of her life; she never for a moment failed in her loving surrender to God, or in patience or humility. There was an indefinable expression of peace on her face. One felt that her soul had reached the goal so longed for throughout a life which had had no other aim but this. Before she died, she said to me one day in a serious voice, like our Lord: 'All is well, all is finished, love only matters.'"

her ascension, the more marked was the transcendental quality of her virtues, but joy in suffering, lovingly endured, remains the outstanding characteristic of Sœur Thérèse's sanctity.

Before she would own herself beaten by the fever which had been wasting her for nearly two years, Sœur Thérèse had continued to take her share of community duties and to be present at the Divine Office beyond what was humanly possible. She was upheld by a supernatural and miraculous force: "During the night office her heart would stop beating, so violent were the efforts she made to stand up and join in the psalmody. . . . The day before she came to night recreation for the last time she had taken more than half an hour to get back to her cell; she had to sit down almost at every step; it cost her untold efforts to undress herself unaided. In spite of her express prohibition, one of her favourite novices, Sœur Marie de la Trinité, went and told the Prioress, Mère Marie de Gonzague, and thenceforth "they began to look after her in real earnest." But they left her in her cell. "I am glad to suffer in solitude," she said; "as soon as people begin to be sorry for me and to pet me, I no longer have any joy of my suffering." We, who know the secret of her joys, are not surprised; she loved. Had she not written in one of her poems:

"Yea, to suffer and to love, is purest of all joys"

She used to tell the novices who came to see her in her cell, and who used to grieve to see her sufferings: "Don't be so sad about me; I have reached the point of not being able to suffer any more, because all suffering is sweet to me." It is clear that suffering united her more closely to Christ her bridegroom; the more she was crushed beneath its pains, the more trustfully she surrendered herself into the arms of her divine Master. On July 6, 1897, a further hæmorrhage took place, and the doctor diagnosed serious congestion of the lungs; it was therefore rightly thought that the wretched pallet on which the invalid lay was too hard for her weak body, and two days later she was taken down to the infirmary. She loved her cell with that love which religious men and women have for the place where they have fought, and practised virtue, and received graces from God; and that is why when she parted from it for ever she said: "I have suffered much here: gladly would I have died here." And two days before she had made this most important confidence:

"I read a very beautiful passage in the considerations on the *Imitation*. Our Lord, in the garden of Olives, enjoyed all the delights of the Trinity and yet his agony was none the less cruel. This is a great mystery, but I assure you that I can form some inkling of it from that which I myself am enduring."

Several times during the last weeks of her life she gave vent to the same thought under various

analogous forms.[1] Beneath the stormy disturbances caused by her outward trials and tempests, the soul's deep dwelling remained tranquil and serene. "Did not our Lord die a victim of love?" she would say, "and look what his agony was!" Our Lord's agony on the Cross was terrible indeed, physically terrible on account of the suffering he endured in his body, and morally terrible on account of the darkness and the abandonment he endured in his soul. *My God, my God,* he cried, *why hast thou forsaken me?* And in that very moment he enjoyed the Beatific Vision. It is a paradox of extreme human suffering and of supreme beatitude which divine love and the union of the soul with God alone can explain in part.

Sœur Thérèse, who was glad to go to God, felt as St Paul did when he exclaimed: *I long to be dissolved and to be with Christ.* And indeed the saint used to say: "Oh, how glad I am to see my body being destroyed; I am becoming a skeleton. That is just what I like." And when the chaplain asked her if she were quite resigned to die, she answered: "Father, it seems to me that one only needs resignation to live: I only feel glad to die." On July 25, her sister, Mère Agnès de Jésus, seeing her in such pain, told her that she "had now come to desire her death." Sœur Thérèse told her: "You must

[1] "I frankly confess that I feel as if I were dying of love, as our Lord died on the cross."

not say that, little mother, for suffering is just what pleases me most in life." And a few days later: "There, don't grieve! If I do suffocate, God will give me strength. I love him; he will never forsake me!"—"Isn't it very hard to suffer so?"—"No, I can still tell our Lord that I love him, and that's enough." She pointed to a small glass which contained some very nasty medicine but looked like a delicious liqueur. "There," she said, "you have a figure of my life. . . . People have always thought that I was quaffing delicious liqueurs, while it was bitterness all the time; all the same, my life has not been a bitter one, because I have discovered how to find my joy and delight in all the bitter things which came my way."

On July 30, she received Extreme Unction. "Father Superior spoke only of love to me; how touched I was!" As death seemed imminent, they brought down her pallet to the infirmary to lay her body out on, according to monastic custom. When the infirmary door was opened she caught sight of it, and, understanding, was glad. She liked to joke about the preparations for her funeral, although she was still in cruel and constant pain. "I have found peace and happiness here below," she said, "but only in suffering, for I have had much to suffer on earth. You must tell people this. . . . I have had a constant desire to suffer ever since my first Communion. Yet I never thought of finding my joy

in it. That is a grace which was only granted to me later."

This undeniable inward joy amid suffering of every kind is mysterious indeed. There seems to have been in the depth of her soul a hearth glowing with the love of God and with a joy which swallowed up everything. "It is so sweet," she would say, "to feel weak and small. . . . Don't grieve so. . . . See how happy our Lord has made me. . . . I am always happy and cheerful . . . the thought of my imperfection gives me positive pleasure, far surpassing any compliments, which only bore me." How do saints manage to soar so high as to delight in the very things which cause ordinary mortals acute torture?

If to the utmost of our ability we insist and lean with all our weight, as it were, on this contradiction or flagrant paradox between joy and suffering in St Teresa of the Child Jesus, we are simply obeying one of her last injunctions: "Deep down in my soul there is, I own, joy and transports of delight . . . but that would not encourage other people if they thought I had not suffered much . . . oh, if they only knew how much I suffer! . . . Last night, utterly exhausted, I asked our Lady to hold my head in her hands so that I might be able to bear it. . . ."

And all the while those temptations to doubt and despair haunted the outer courts of her mind and imagination, though they were powerless to

enter into the sanctuary of her faith, where our Lord really dwelt as in a tabernacle. The windows of the infirmary overlooked the garden; pointing to a dark corner, she said: "My soul is in just such a black hole, but I am quite peaceful." These trials, as all who witnessed her end attest, did not lessen as death drew near; on the contrary, the veil became even more impenetrable. She never lost those charming child-like ways which made her so delightful a companion. Everybody wanted to see and to talk to her. "At each visit the doctor could hardly find words to express his admiration: 'If you only knew what she has to endure! I have never seen anyone suffer so intensely with such an expression of supernatural joy . . . she was not made for earth!'"

We repeat, and again repeat, that the saint obtained the strength to suffer thus joyously, graciously, and cheerfully by humility, by her utter surrender and mistrust of herself. She was fond of saying that St Peter had fallen because he relied too much on his own strength. With regard to her terrible sufferings, she made the following memorable statement: "I could never ask greater sufferings of God. If he were to increase them I should endure them gladly, because they would be of his sending. But if I were to ask for them they would be all my own, and I should have to bear them all alone; and I have never been able to do anything all by

myself." She answered Mère Agnès de Jésus in a similar strain, when the latter marvelled at her patience: "I have not yet had a moment's patience! It is not *my* patience; people don't understand." So that we should be utterly mistaken if we were to attribute to mere human virtue and stoicism that heroic patience and abnegation which, in the saint, was an effect of love, a gift of the Holy Ghost. "How utterly impossible it is," she exclaimed, "to put such feelings into oneself! It is the Holy Ghost, who blows where he lists, who gives them to us."

The strength of soul and the inward joy experienced by Sœur Thérèse made her better able to resist the ravages of the disease than others; when the doctor gave her only another day to live, she lingered on for another month. But her body was wasted beyond conception. For some weeks past she had lost all inclination for food. Every afternoon from three o'clock onwards she was consumed by a burning fever, and copious sweats exhausted her yet further. Two or three times a day she was seized by a violent hæmorrhage. She was shaken by fits of coughing, with terrible attacks of suffocation. They made her inhale ether, but her breathing was so oppressed that the remedy had no effect. The disease spared her face, which kept its roundness and its expression, yet she reached such a degree of emaciation that the bones came through her skin, and painful sores formed on various parts of her

body. Tuberculosis of the intestines had resulted in gangrene, so that the little sister could in very truth apply to herself those prophecies spoken of the Messias: *Ego sum vermis et non homo.* She suffered from a burning thirst, which, as she put it, plunged her into purgatory. Nothing could slake it, for to drink was like throwing oil on the fire. "Whenever I drink anything," she said, "it is as though I were pouring fire on fire." Whenever they raised her to a sitting position, in order to relieve the fits of coughing which sometimes lasted for hours, she said that "she was sitting on spikes of iron," and besought them to pray for her.

There were reserved for her trials which her saintly soul felt most intensely. Her greatest and most beloved devotion was, as we know, Holy Communion. But from August 16 until her death she was unable to receive it on account of the frequent hæmorrhages, and this was a cruel privation to her loving heart. On August 6, the feast of the Transfiguration, they put a large picture of the Holy Face beside her bed, surrounded with flowers and lit by a nightlight. She never suffered more from temptations against the faith than on that night: "Mother," she said to her sister, "how I was tempted last night; but I looked at the Holy Face all the time, and made acts of faith." From this we see that the soul's martyrdom continued while the body's martyrdom became wellnigh intolerable. We may be

quite sure that Sœur Thérèse experienced suffering in a degree to which few men have attained on earth, except our Lord. She said one day:

"Mother, pray for me! If you only knew how much I am suffering! Ask that I may not lose patience. . . . I need God's help. . . . And I so longed for martyrdom of every kind! One has to experience it to know what it means. . . . I can quite well understand that people without faith commit suicide when they are in such great pain. Take care you do not leave any poisonous medicines beside the sick when they are attacked by such violent pain. I tell you that when one is suffering like this, one is but a step removed from going out of one's mind."

After such statements we cannot doubt but that the little saint had experienced the paroxysms of human suffering. "You must not desire to keep her with you in the state she is in," said the doctor; "what she has to endure is too terrible. But what an angel she is, and what a heavenly smile she always has!" And indeed the most wonderful thing about her was the fact that, despite her sufferings and the darkness of her soul, she never lost her angelic simplicity. "She remained as charming as a child," says Mère Agnès de Jésus, "the higher part of her soul remained peaceful and serene under the influence of grace. It was then that she told me of her boundless longings and of her hopes of seeing them realized before very long: 'Just now, like Joan of Arc in her prison, I am in chains, but my

deliverance will soon come, and then will be the hour of victory for me.'"

And all the while there was in her that unbounded mortification, that asceticism of littleness, that abnegation of self in favour of others, which, as we have shown, in the end equals the most heroic mortifications of the greatest saints. There are many more incidents which we might record; we will be content with recalling one of the simplest yet sublimest acts of charitable mortification which the saint ever practised. It was her last night on earth; she had reached such a pitch of exhaustion that the least noise, or talking, or whispering was more than she could bear; however, her sister, who was watching beside her, fell asleep just after she had given her a drink. Sœur Thérèse noticed this, and not wanting to wake her sisters up, "she stayed as she was, holding her little glass, until one of them woke up."

We will not attempt to describe her last day on earth or her passing; the story may be read in her autobiography. We need only notice here the fact that Sœur Thérèse's agony was terrible; she could only breathe by uttering little cries, her face was wet with a heavy sweat. Yet when the community entered the infirmary the little saint welcomed them with her sweetest smile. She was wonderfully resigned because her will was entirely conformed with the divine will. She did not ask for greater suffering, but neither did

she want to suffer less. At three in the afternoon she gave one arm to Mère Agnès and the other to Sœur Geneviève; they could not help comparing her to the dying Christ on the cross. Indeed, she was a willing victim, crucified for mankind's salvation. There was nothing more she could say to our Lord; she was transformed into him; she loved him. She had that very morning declared, and had repeated it half an hour earlier:

"I have prayed so fervently to our Lady. . . . And yet it has been unmixed agony, without a ray of consolation. . . . Mother, the cup is full to overflowing! Never should I have thought it possible to suffer so much. . . . I can only explain it by my great longing to save souls."

To think that those biassed freethinking critics could write that "after a few months of smiling and resigned agony, she gently, very gently, breathed her last!" But in this supreme and sacred moment all thought of controversy must be put away. About four o'clock in the afternoon the Prioress, Mère Marie de Gonzague, bore her the most precious witness any dying soul could wish to hear:

"My child, you are quite ready to appear before God, because you have always understood the virtue of humility." Sœur Thérèse thought for a moment, then said quite simply: "Yes, I believe I have ever sought truth only. Yes, I have understood humility of heart."

The agony lasted for three hours longer. Death was slow in coming. Sœur Thérèse said

in a voice which was hardly audible, in the midst of the death rattle : " Well, after all, I would not choose to suffer less." About seven o'clock in the evening she uttered her last words, gazing at the crucifix : " I love him. . . . My God, I love thee !" She suddenly fell back on her pillows, with her head bent to the right, then sat up again, looking long and lovingly towards the statue of our Lady. It was September 30, 1897 ; the saint was twenty-four years and nine months old.

CONCLUSION

THE death of a saint, we have said, is, as a rule, evidence of his most characteristic virtues. In Sœur Thérèse's agony we note more especially her humility, her self-surrender, her confidence in God, her heroic patience in suffering, and last but not least, her love of God and of souls, that charity which St Paul called the bond of perfection and the queen of all virtues. In the course of our study of Sœur Thérèse's spirituality and of her mission, towards the end a sort of intellectual vertigo came over us while trying to follow her lofty flights with our eyes. We said to ourselves: "May she not have been an angel whom our Lord allowed to become incarnate to renew his Passion, to continue his Redemption, and to recall his chief teaching?" Remember that she thought it less seemly to take her meals in public, and would not have understood this custom had not Jesus and Mary themselves set the example. She used to say: "I have never felt at home in my body; when I was a tiny child I was ashamed of it, I was not comfortable in it." May she not have been an angel, the angel of the Agony whom our Lord sent to continue his Passion and to remind us of

our littleness? But Sœur Thérèse was an angel in metaphor and by analogy only. And the reality is simpler and more sublime than all the dreams of theology.

We are afraid lest the picture we have had to paint with such bold strokes of her sufferings and death should obscure in the reader's mind the gentle personality of St Teresa of the Child Jesus. Her sufferings, it is true, were quite exceptional, and never will there be saints who will reach the summit of their spiritual ascent by any other way but that of the cross. But all little souls, who are legion and among whom are we, will not be called upon to endure trials like unto those of Sœur Thérèse. We shall be perfectly able to work out our salvation, to become saints, and great saints, by bearing our small trials daily until death. The whole art lies in accepting them and in lovingly offering them to almighty God. Heaven does not ask more from us. We must not think of Sœur Thérèse mainly and only as having endured martyrdom of soul and body. We should never understand, even by invoking the love of God, how she was able to accept them with serenity and joy. We must rather carry away with us another picture of her, one which is a truer symbol of her way of self-surrender and of love.

Sœur Thérèse de l'Enfant-Jésus loved to throw rose-petals before the Christ on the great Calvary in the large square courtyard in the convent at

Lisieux. She said that she did this, not to obtain any special grace, but to please our Lord, simply for love of him. What a splendid symbol she makes, the little twenty-year-old Carmelite nun, as she stoops and rises again to cast her flowers right up to the feet, the wounds, the thorny crown of her divine Master! Nor should we forget what the roses signify spiritually; they represent our acts of self-denial, the mortifications we impose upon our nature and our affections. When she was no longer able, on account of her illness, to cast flowers before the Calvary, Sœur Thérèse used to wipe our Lord's face with rose-petals, a gesture worthy of Veronica. "Pick up the petals," the saint told them on her deathbed; "don't lose any of them. . . ." Little acts of self-sacrifice offered to God for love of his Son are precious indeed. In all probability our lives, the lives of those of us who have not been destined to any unusual mission, will consist mainly of little daily sufferings, for great sufferings are more rare. Let us accept them patiently and humbly, and, above all, lovingly; they will be assessed very high in eternity. To cast flowers of small acts of self-denial before our Lord is to walk in the path of confidence and utter self-surrender, it is to endeavour to imitate St Teresa of the Child Jesus in our poor measure, it is, in fine, to be obedient to Pope Pius XI's invitation, who declared in the Bull of Canonization:

"Faithful people of Christ, to-day the Church presents to you a new and admirable model of virtue, which you all ought continually to contemplate."

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